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GAELIC NOVA SCOTIA

AN ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, AND SOCIAL IMPACT STUDY

Michael Kennedy

Nova Scotia Museum
Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada

November 2002

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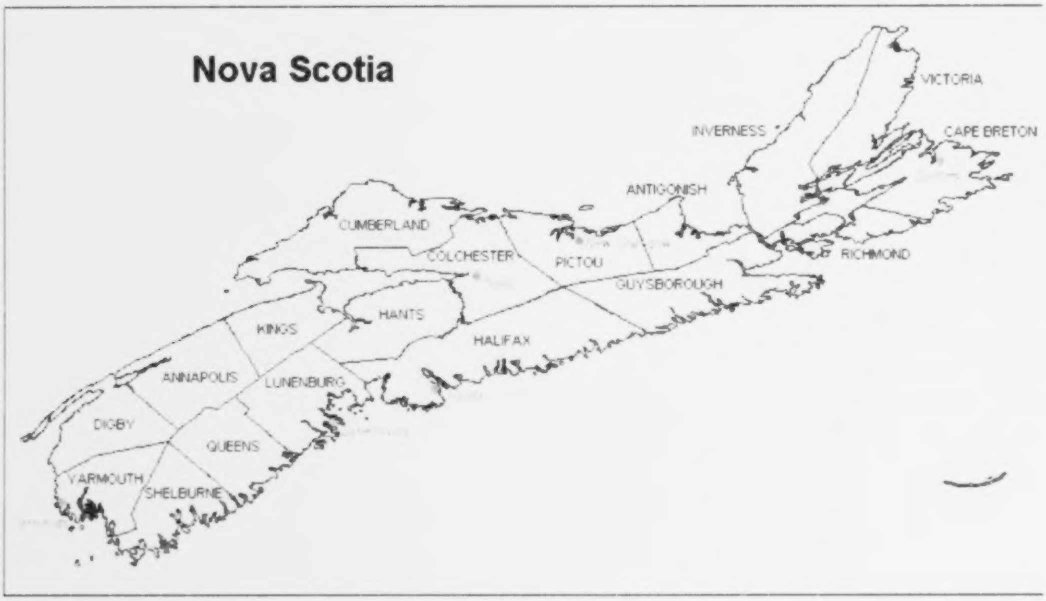

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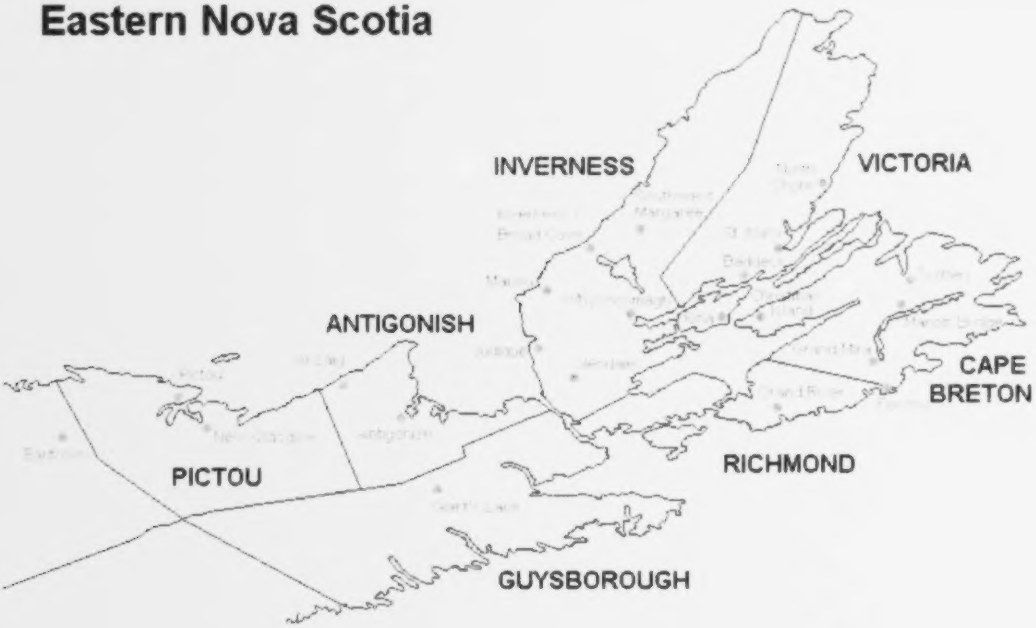

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Michael Kennedy

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Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada

Nova Scotia Museum
1747 Summer Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3H 3A6

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INTRODUCTION

Scope and Method

Scottish Gaels are one of Nova Scotia's largest ethnic groups, and Gaelic culture contributes tens of millions of dollars per year to the provincial economy. Yet, there has never been a systematic policy developed to provide support for the culture in Nova Scotia, and surprisingly little accurate information about the province's Gaelic heritage is widely known or available. This report represents a first attempt to address that need.

The initial idea for this study came from David Newlands of the Heritage Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism and Culture, who brought together representatives from Cultural Affairs, the Department of Education, and the Gaelic community to discuss the prospect of developing a Gaelic cultural policy. At that time, it became apparent that an assessment of the state of Gaelic in the province was a necessary prerequisite to planning. Peter Guildford of Cultural Affairs assumed responsibility for the project, and the *ad hoc* committee drew up a research plan identifying four major areas of enquiry: (1) a description of the historical context of Gaelic language and culture in Nova Scotia; (2) an inventory of the current resources available for, and opportunities to participate in, Gaelic language and cultural activities; (3) an assessment of the economic contribution of Gaelic language and cultural activities to the province; and (4) an assessment of the potential of Gaelic cultural resources and activities as tourism product. The research proposal was put to public tender, and Dr. Michael Kennedy was awarded the contract as project coordinator.

Given the tight time line and the relative paucity of previous research on the province's Gaelic heritage, a large amount of ground had to be covered and a great deal of new information synthesized rather quickly. Research was conducted in the Nova Scotia Archives in Halifax, at the Beaton Institute, University College of Cape Breton, at St. Francis Xavier University, over the Internet, and in the field. Scores of documents were reviewed, including archival and government papers, census returns, academic studies, television documentaries and field recordings, print media, and studies in culture, tourism, and economic development. In addition, nearly 500 individuals and organizations were contacted for information. They seemed particularly heartened to hear that the government was planning a development plan for Gaelic, and their enthusiasm and co-operation played a critical role in the success of the project. The media was also helpful, providing good publicity for the research and publishing local contact numbers for the research assistants and the project coordinator.

In order to ensure as thorough coverage as possible for the project, which ran for less than three months, from February into April, Dr. Kennedy selected research assistants to assist in the gathering and preparation of specific sets of data. For the enumeration of the various Gaelic events that take place each year, the province was divided into four major zones, and research assistants with local knowledge were engaged to canvass each of these areas and to act as local contacts.

These were Eastern Cape Breton (Jenna MacNeil), western Cape Breton (Derrick and Melody Cameron), Antigonish and Pictou County (Trueman Matheson), and Halifax and mainland (Caroline Cameron). Tracey Dares-MacNeil collected data on Gaelic in the music industry before leaving the project to give birth to her first child, Jessie Helen. Gaeltalk Communications surveyed published Gaelic sources to provide an estimation of the number of Gaelic poets once active in Nova Scotia, and Jonathan Dembling provided invaluable assistance in census analysis and in the production of graphics for the report.

The Problem of Culture and Identity

One of the most difficult challenges for this report was also one of the most basic—how to determine what constituted Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture? Cultural identity is fundamentally about being a part of one recognizable culture rather than another and is, therefore, highly communal. However, just where the individual is located within one cultural group and where the boundaries between that group and another are drawn can also be quite idiosyncratic — a fundamental tension, that makes analysis a complicated and, at times, controversial undertaking. Cultural identity is an amalgam of a large number of multi-faceted and often contradictory elements: personality, race, language, religion, sex, age, occupation, wealth, social standing, political affiliation, marital status, family, community, region, province, nation, and society, among others. At these points of intersection — and particularly where these points of intersection occur between cultural groups — identity is subjected to especially heavy but often invisible strains. Cultural identity must be fluid enough to accommodate these various demands but also sufficiently rigid to have meaningful distinctiveness.

Many cultural groups have a series of formal social structures that help stabilize culture and reinforce the sense of shared identity. In a modern, bureaucratic society these may include, among other things, an educational system, a legal system, and a system of governance that have grown out of the particular language and culture and that, in turn, support and shape them, enhancing their viability and prestige and, in most instances, establishing recognizable standards of excellence. Usually associated with these institutions of social control is a standard, literary language with clearly defined legal status and some form of media — print, radio, television, etc. — which operates in that language, serving as a mass outlet for the expression of the group's cultural arts and reinforcing the group's cultural perspective on events.

Some cultures, by contrast, find themselves subsumed within others — often after outright conflict and conquest at some point in their history. In this sort of arrangement they frequently lack many, and in some cases, all, of these formal structures for identifying, stabilizing, and reinforcing their culture. Instead, they are placed in the contradictory situation where the chief institutions of social control are not rooted in their culture or language and are effectively barred to those individuals most rooted in the native culture, who would normally play the most active part in determining their direction and function. Instead of playing a supporting and reinforcing role, these institutions actually undermine the minority group's social structure, culture, and language and erode its sense of a distinctive and worthy identity.

As more and more of the minority group assimilate into the dominant society, the issue of what constitutes the boundaries of cultural identity for the minority group becomes increasingly problematic. It is not simply a case of one group getting smaller and another group getting larger. Many of those becoming a functional part of the dominant society are unable or unwilling to shed their former cultural identity — or at least their sense of cultural identity, which is not always the same thing. This desire to be a part of both cultures helps legitimize the process of external mediation of the minority group's culture by also challenging the central importance of a fully functional culture to the minority group's identity. Take, for example, people of impeccable Acadian descent who have been thoroughly assimilated into English-speaking society. They may have been raised with no knowledge of the French language or Acadian traditions and may be indistinguishable from their English neighbours with whom they interact on a daily basis. They may not even be able to communicate or effectively interact with French-speaking Acadians, having no knowledge of their language or traditions. They may be accepted as English by their acquaintances and consider themselves English. In such a situation, there is no real identity issue. But what if, in all this, these individuals happen to consider themselves still to be Acadian? Such a belief would pose a serious challenge to what constitutes Acadian identity and, ultimately, to what constitutes the essentials of Acadian culture.

This presents a problem for the individuals in question and also for the larger ethnic group. The concept of cultural identity, as mentioned before, needs to have a communal element, and if individuals find themselves excluded from a particular group of which they feel a part, then there is potential for conflict. Those seeking to be included in a particular cultural group with which they really have little or no functional interaction may attempt to do so by relegating to secondary importance primary characteristics, such as language, that bar their full participation in that group. The same minority group may feel that these characteristics are the very basis of its cultural identity. This conflict can help further undermine the culture's viability by realigning priorities and redirecting the resources necessary to sustain that culture to areas of far less importance — from French language schools, for instance, to ethnic costumes, festivals, or symbols of varying degrees of relevance and accuracy.

For individuals caught between two cultures in this way, attempting to maintain a sense of identity based upon a functional cultural role within the dominant society and little more than a sentimental (and sometimes entirely imaginary) cultural attachment to the minority group can be a confusing and painful experience. It can also have serious repercussions for the minority group as a whole, as these individuals — by the very fact of their assimilation — are often in positions of greater social authority than members of the minority group. They tend to have greater access to and influence over the main institutions of social control such as schools, government, and the media and are, therefore, often in a better position to forward their cultural agenda, despite the weakness of their grounding in the minority culture.

This is a very real but also a very clear-cut example of one major problem minority cultural groups face. Issues concerning culture, identity, and assimilation, however, are rarely cast in such dramatic relief. Again, to use the Acadian example, the French language may be a fundamental defining characteristic of Acadian society, but there are fluent French speakers who are not Acadians and fluent English speakers who are. There are fluent French-speaking Acadians who wish to abandon their culture and non-French speaking Acadians who wish to embrace it. There are French speakers from other areas (France, for example) who can easily converse with Acadians and understand their literature, but who would be less at home with the customs, forms of social interaction, and sense of humour than English-speaking Cajuns from Louisiana might be. There are French speakers from the heart of Acadian communities who are otherwise indistinguishable from mainstream English North Americans and non-French speakers on the periphery whose social patterns and customs seem to immediately mark them as Acadian. And everywhere in between are people with varying levels of language proficiency, knowledge of history and tradition, and varying degrees of interest in their culture. On top of this, culture is continually evolving, making it difficult in some instances to distinguish between normal social change and assimilation.

For Nova Scotia's Scottish Gaelic population the problems of cultural identity are even more complicated and critical. Definitions of "Celt," "Scot," "Gael" and "Highlander" and ideas on when they should be used and to whom they should apply are even more hotly contested and complex than definitions of "Acadian," "Cajun," or "French." English has been expanding into the Gaelic cultural world for roughly a thousand years, and the results, particularly in the last two and a half centuries, have been far reaching. Gaelic has long since been displaced from the major institutions of social control in Scotland, mounting a strong challenge to the culture's viability even in its homeland, let alone in its New World communities. Massive decline of the Gaelic language has been the most notable result of this uneven relationship, but cultural knowledge and skills have deteriorated apace within once-flourishing Gaelic communities. English culture is playing an increasingly important role in charting the direction for Gaelic culture and for setting its cultural definitions and priorities. Assimilation is a fact of life for all Gaels.

Such enormous social change has resulted not only in evident cultural decline but has also made subtler but equally pernicious challenges to Gaelic cultural identity. A long period of social and linguistic decay undermines confidence not only in the declining culture itself but also in the perceived competence of individuals from within the declining cultural group. For many, the worst symptoms of repression and cultural decay are now mistaken as inherent qualities of Gaelic culture itself and of Gaels. The negative connotations of cultural conservatism, in such instances, encourage some individuals to disassociate themselves as much as possible from the more meaningful aspects of their culture, which are often stigmatized as "backward" and dysfunctional, although such individuals are rarely willing to give up their sense of attachment to the culture entirely. This encourages internal redefinition of the minority culture, as in the hypothetical Acadian example above, to make it fit more comfortably into mainstream (in this case, English) definitions of respectability and to align it with mainstream goals.

For Gaels this process has struck at the very heart of cultural identity. At one time to be a Scot was to be a "Gael." Today, however, only a miniscule percentage of the population of Scotland speaks Gaelic, and few would consider themselves Gaels. Although there are Scots in the non-Gaelic–speaking majority who do consider Gaelic to be the ancestral language and culture of Scotland, there are many others who do not. In fact, in some quarters, Gaelic is even looked upon with hostility as some sort of foreign or illegitimate part of the Scotland's heritage — a legacy of centuries of repression. This means, among other things, that definitions, perceptions, and symbols of Scottishness can vary dramatically — even to the point of being diametrically opposed to one another — depending upon one's understanding of and sympathy towards Gaelic culture.

Centuries of repression have resulted in Gaelic cultural decline, in negative characterizations of Gaelic culture, and in dramatically decreased meaningful Gaelic influence upon the evolution of national Scottish culture and symbology. However, there has been an important countercurrent. Even while Gaelic society was being vigorously repressed and denigrated, it was being enthusiastically romanticized. As one scholar described it, Gaels were transformed by the dominant society over a period of time from "threat to pet" (Clyde 1995, foreword). As another scholar concluded, this external mediation of Gaelic culture has become deeply ingrained:

> Celtic 'natives' have a long history of suffering in silence while an external view of themselves and their cultures is promulgated by the 'superior' power. 'Interpreting the natives' probably has a longer history in the Celtic context than in any other. (Meek 2000, 58)

The roots of the more romantic interpretation of Celtic experience lay in the European Renaissance and the rediscovery of the classic literature of Greece and Rome. The concept of great civilizations that had fallen into decline was enormously appealing and had a huge impact on the intellectual culture of Europe. This was probably especially true of Britain and France, which were home to a once great Celtic civilization specifically mentioned in classic Greek and Roman literature and now obviously in an advanced state of decay — at least from the perspective of non-Celtic observers. Scottish Highlanders became the archetypal "noble savages." With their simple, close-to-nature lifestyle, their unique social organization, their heroic, warrior ideals, their ancient poetry, and their distinctive language, traditions, music and clothing, they were easily imagined as the last remnants of an ancient, doomed, but formerly admirable civilization analogous to that of the Greeks and Romans.

A notable feature of this Celtic romanticism was the lack of contemporary Celtic involvement. One of the earliest sources of fascination, for example, was with the druids, the philosopher priests of ancient Celtic society. It is impossible to say with any certainty when the druid order disappeared from Celtic civilization, but Christianity had largely replaced the native Celtic religion close to a thousand years before the rediscovery of Druidry by post-Renaissance romanticists. There was little information on druids in the classical sources of Greece and Rome and equally little in the Celtic literary sources of Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, which scarcely mentioned them during the Middle Ages, and which, in any event, were largely ignored by romanticists. In developing their own concept of Druidry, no reference was made by the revivalists to the native spiritual and intellectual traditions of living Celtic communities — particularly to bards and priests who would have been the closest modern inheritors of any modern druidic tradition, slight as it may have been. Indeed, the latter were frequently the target of repressive legislation from the Renaissance onward.

Despite this, by the early 18th century, those who described themselves as druids, and even full druidic societies, began to emerge in Britain. Tellingly, this emergence usually occurred in England. Although the movement has continued to grow – there are hundreds of such orders throughout the world today — and has counted such luminaries as Sir Winston Churchill and Frank Lloyd Wright in its ranks, it is still almost entirely absent from areas in which Celtic languages are actually spoken and in which Celtic traditions have been most faithfully handed down to the present day. As Prof. Donald Meek has pointed out, this process of romanticism and cultural redefinition is actually greatly assisted by ignorance of the minority group's language.

> Without the impediments of the distinctive Celtic languages of the British Isles, the appropriation of the 'Celtic' material is greatly facilitated, and an alternative 'Celtic' culture is created largely for the consumption of 'outsiders' and non-speakers of Celtic languages who continue to colonise the 'Celtic Fringe', either physically or spiritually. (Meek 2000, 79)
>
> In this way 'Celtic' is further emptied of meaning, and, rather than being strengthened, genuine Celtic culture is being undermined by covering it with layers of highly dubious interpretation. (Meek 2000, 11)

The dominant culture is often quite comfortable with such "dubious interpretation," creating the most outlandish and contradictory characterizations of minority cultures, content that they are simply evidence of the inherent oddness, otherworldliness, and inconsistency of the culture in question rather than signs of misinterpretation or inaccurate analysis. For Celtic cultures this misappropriation and misrepresentation can border on the bizarre — such as claims that the Celts are possessed of magic powers, that they originally came from outer space or Atlantis, or that they are the descendants of one of the lost tribes of Israel. Quite the opposite from being marginalized, those who make claims such as these often enjoy easier access to the media than does the minority language group itself asking for a more rigorous and honest representation of its culture.

> Some may be subconsciously programmed to believe that 'Celtic things' do not wholly belong to the real world … The world of the Celts is thought to be one of make-believe, and, in such a world, there is no perceived need for rigour. The approach can be as romantic and creative as one cares to make it. (Meek 2000, 233)

Even within more conventional bounds, this "romantic and creative" approach has pulled Gaelic culture in very contradictory directions and has often resulted, not surprisingly, in highly confused symbology and characterization. It took some time for an explicit link to be made between the ancient Celtic world of the classical sources and the modern Celtic world of the Scottish Highlands (and other areas), but by the late 18th century this had been fully achieved. The Romantic Movement was in full spate, and the reinvention and commodification of Gaelic culture was well under way.

Early romanticists portrayed druids (and by extension all Celts) as archetypal Christians, much like themselves, while New Age exponents of Druidry, who reject orthodox Christianity, depict them today as archetypal pagans (while at the same time espousing a philosophy of love, tolerance, and harmony). During the empire-building period of the Victorian era, Scottish Gaels were portrayed as inherently dependable and militaristic, while an emerging literary trend of the late Victorian era — the "Celtic Twilight" — characterized them as inherently whimsical and mystical. In similarly contradictory manner, the emerging philosophy of Aryanism from the 18th century onward rated the Celts as an inferior race, placing them well down on the "index of negressence" and sometimes casting them as an anti-type to the progressive Germanic English or Lowland Scots. Highland dress, itself, was characterized by many Scots outside the Highlands in the 18th century as the symbol of a backward, rebellious, even foreign society and was banned in 1748; by the 19th century, in response to the demands of surging romanticism (and a crisis in the Lowland Scottish weaving industry), Highland dress was well on its way to becoming a national symbol for Scotland as a whole and, in its modern corrupted form, more popularly worn in the Lowlands than the Highlands. The kilt, once simply the functional dress of the Gaelic-speaking common people of the Highlands, became a badge of the English-speaking social elite, worn even by the royal family. For many it became a symbol of formalized celebration — of pomp, pageantry, decorum, and social order — while for others, such as performers of heavy metal rock music, it has become a symbol of anarchy — sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll. The contradictions go on and on.

Many of these external characterizations (and a host of others) are the primary source of information available to English-speaking society today regarding Celtic history and culture. The major reason that they tend to offer such a confused and contradictory picture of the "inherent" nature of Celts or Celtic culture is that they generally make no reference to existing Celtic communities, to living Celtic cultures, or to the best available Celtic scholarship. In fact, attempts to suggest that these should be the first sources of authority for the interpretation and representation of Celtic culture are often met with skepticism and even open hostility.

> … the difficulties confronting the 'real Indian spiritual leader' are not unlike those faced by well-informed authorities on Celtic culture who attempt to undo the damage inflicted by pseudo-Celtic writers. The writer of this book has experienced precisely that attitude on the part of pseudo-Celticisers with whom he has engaged in debate. Those who attempt to defend genuine Native American culture — or Celtic culture for that matter — can all too easily be branded as 'extremist' or 'polemicist' or 'non-native' or even 'revisionist', especially by those who have themselves little knowledge of the internal realities of the culture concerned. (Meek 2000, 36)

The minority culture, then, is marginalized through repression and romanticism and then, finally, by an outright rejection of its authority over the interpretation of its own culture.

Over the last centuries, English-speaking society has relentlessly commodified Gaelic culture, in this fashion, to suit its own needs. While this has not always been done with ill intent, it has become married to more calculating commercial practices designed to sell dubious Gaelic and Celtic products to an often-unwitting public with little or no concern for accuracy or relevance.

> Indeed, Druids have also been hijacked by the 'New Age' movement and conjured to their philosophies. An offering which has been reprinted several times now, *The Mind of the Druid*, by Dr. E. Graham Howe, has a foreword by David Loxley, claiming to be 'Chief Druid of the Druid Order'. Again, this work has absolutely nothing to do with ancient Celtic philosophy, but, sadly, Druids are commercially acceptable in the new wave of esoterica and alternative religious thought. Any half-baked philosophy can have the word 'Druid' or even 'Celtic' attached to it and be assured of an enthusiastic, if somewhat gullible, following. (Berresford Ellis 1994, 13)

In the modern era, the insatiable demand for new philosophies, religions, literatures, music, traditions, clothing, jewelry, foods, and other products that can be easily experienced without any great commitment of time or understanding makes it likely that the pressure to externally mediate and commodify minority cultures like Celtic or Gaelic culture will only intensify. The effects of this are insidious. Not only must the minority community struggle to have its own definitions heard and acknowledged in the much louder cacophony of misappropriation, it must struggle equally hard just to have it acknowledged that it has any meaningful cultural standards at all and that such standards matter.

Obviously the multitude of identities and symbols that have been fashioned for Celts and Gaels over the centuries and the many definitions of their culture cannot all be accurate. It is clear that this is a cultural group, like any other, which must have internal definitions of its culture and internal ideas about its identity, and that these internal standards must be afforded authority. Somewhere amongst the pejorative and romantic images are a people and their culture. At the same time, any single definition of Gaelic culture or of Gaelic identity would likely prove unrealistically rigid, particularly given the far-reaching effects of assimilation. As this report endeavours to examine the complex history and reality of Gaelic Nova Scotia, every effort will be made to temper rigour with an awareness that any cultural group, particularly one undergoing assimilation, will not have a single fixed view of itself shared equally by all of its members.

For Nova Scotian Gaels, there is the added challenge of having the legitimacy of their cultural forms recognized and acknowledged when they do not always conform to Scottish examples. Gaelic culture has been established in Nova Scotia for nearly 250 years, and there are not only unique adaptations to the Canadian environment (both physical and social) but also unique survivals of old traditions that have disappeared from Scotland. The present authority structure for Scottish tradition, rooted primarily in the Scottish Lowlands, is particularly poorly placed to recognize the validity of such evolution, but has usually been the cultural touchstone used by cultural promoters, even in Nova Scotia. Much can certainly be learned from a better understanding of the cultural forms of the Scottish Highlands and from continued interaction, but what is more important still is attempting to understand Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture in its own New World context and acknowledging the validity of that experience.

Considering the contested nature of Gaelic culture and identity, Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture cannot be definitively outlined in this report, but an attempt will be made to be as definitive as circumstances allow. The conclusions and areas of concentration will no doubt challenge the perceptions of many readers. It is hoped that they will do so in a positive way and that the information provided will prove sufficiently sound to provide a good foundation for understanding Gaelic Nova Scotia and for discussing the possible road ahead. In researching and writing this report, every effort has been made to be thorough and accurate, to identify and examine the most important issues, and to provide sufficient background information and references in so doing, keeping in mind that this is not an academic paper. An effort has also been made to tackle the more contentious issues that have proved such an obstacle to Gaelic development in the past and that are routinely avoided in most Gaelic development discussions and programs. The scope of the research project, the complexity of many of the issues, and the twin demands placed upon the report to provide relevant information for government policy development and to serve as an historical reference document for public information and consultation mean that it cannot hope to be exhaustive or definitive. However, it is hoped that at the dawn of a new millennium *Gaelic Nova Scotia: An Economic, Cultural, and Social Impact Study* will prove to be a small but important first step in the development of a comprehensive cultural policy for Gaelic in Nova Scotia.

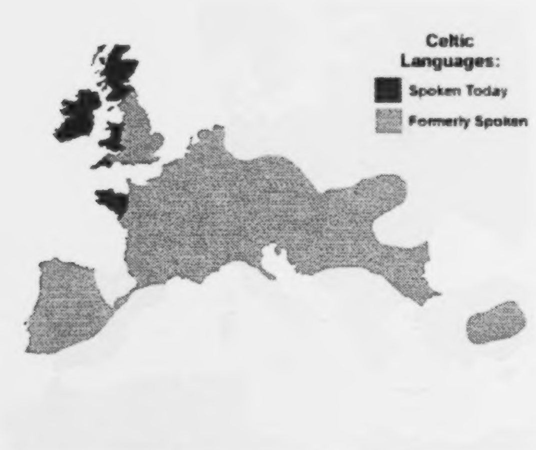
Mike Kennedy
Spring 2001

SECTION ONE: THE MARGINALIZATION OF GAELIC

Celtic Roots

The Celts and Western Civilization

The Celts are often referred to as "the first Europeans" or "the founders of Europe." This is no small claim, considering that the European diaspora currently numbers roughly one billion souls scattered around the globe and that the influence of Western civilization extends far beyond the bounds of even that very large and widely spread community. The basis of the claim rests in the dominant position held by the Celts when Europe first emerged on the historical scene in the writings of the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome, some 2,500 years ago. At that time the *Keltoi*, as the Greeks termed them, occupied a vast domain, encompassing most of Western Europe and even extending into Asia. The Galatians of Biblical fame, for example, were members of a Celtic tribe residing in the area of Ankara, Turkey. They were previously thought to represent the eastern-most reach of Celtic settlement, but recent archaeological evidence suggests that they may have established colonies as far east as the western districts of modern-day China.



(Map courtesy Comunn na Gàidhlig)

Celtic society was powerful, wealthy, highly organized, and artistically and technologically advanced. The Celtic realm was not, however, a political state but rather a cultural zone. The Celts appear to have shared a common language (initially at least), broadly similar forms of social organization, ceremonial practice, and cultural expression, as well as a common religious belief system with a highly educated religious caste, suggesting some sort of coordinated educational system helping to unify this widely spread society. The Celtic political system appears to have been structured along similar lines throughout the Celtic regions, but it was also highly localized, consisting of a series of tribal and federated tribal units focused on regional centres, which were important for trade and defense, with little in the way of formal organizational ties between them.

In spite of the lack of over-arching political structures or a highly centralized "national" institutional infrastructure, Celtic culture seems to have been strongly unified throughout the sprawling region. Decentralized Celtic political structures were not well calculated to unite the Celts against a large-scale outside threat, however, and much of their domain, like that of so many others, was eventually conquered and absorbed by the highly urbanized, highly centralized Roman Empire. Two thousand years ago, the Celts of Continental Europe lost their independence.

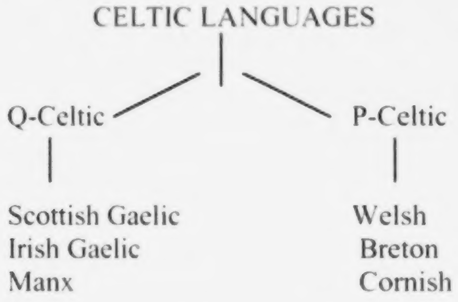
Under centuries of Roman rule, Celtic disappeared as a spoken language throughout Continental Europe, but this was by no means a case of cultural annihilation. Much of the accommodation between the two cultures is no longer apparent to us, since the meeting occurred so long ago, but Roman admiration for Celtic learning has been well documented, as has the employment of Celtic teachers throughout the Roman Empire. All of the masters of panegyric in the later Western Roman Empire, for example, were trained in the Romano-Celtic tradition. Although defeated and eventually absorbed, the Continental Celts managed to play a role in the intellectual shaping of early western civilization.

The Modern "Celtic Fringe"

Not all of the former Celtic realm was conquered and assimilated by the Romans, and this has left Europe with the legacy of the "Celtic Fringe," a small arc in the northwestern corner of Europe where Celtic languages and cultures have survived down to the present day. While the Romans did establish a presence in Britain for several centuries, attempts to absorb the Britons, the ancestors of the modern-day Welsh, Cornish, and Bretons, were not particularly successful. When the Roman Empire began to disintegrate in the fifth century, this region alone, of all the conquered Celtic territory of Europe, saw the full re-emergence of its native Celtic culture. In fact, a colony from Wales and Cornwall was established in Brittany in what is today France during this period of declining Roman influence, leading to the re-Celticization of one small corner of the formerly large Celtic realm of Continental Europe. Over the following centuries, however, much of the territory of the Britons would fall to invading German tribes, such as the Angles and Saxons, leading eventually to the establishment of England.

The Romans had even less of an impact on the extreme north of Britain, in the northern half of what is today Scotland. This was the territory of the Picts, a somewhat enigmatic people who appear to have been closely related in language and culture to the Britons. Although Rome was an awesome presence on the very doorstep of their territory and although conflict did occur, the north of Scotland remained an independent Celtic region.

The area of the once-vast Celtic domain that was least affected by the advance of the Roman Empire was Ireland, a territory inhabited by a third Celtic people known to the Romans as *Scoti* (Scots) and to the Britons as *Gwyddel* (Gaels). Romans and Gaels did battle one another but always, it appears, on Roman-held territory in Britain. The Roman presence in this part of Europe was never secure enough to attempt an advance into the realm of the Gaels, and more meaningful contact seems to have been restricted to peaceful trade. Ireland remained confidently independent and Celtic, and it was ultimately from these roots that Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture would spring.



The Gaels

In the late days of the Roman Empire, the Gaels began flexing their own considerable cultural and political muscle. By the fourth century, they had established colonies all along the west coast of Britain, the most significant and enduring being an area now known as Argyll, which means roughly "Coast of the Gaels." From that area they would eventually come to dominate the north of Britain, which became known as Scotland, in recognition not only of the ruling Gaelic dynasty but of the primacy of Gaelic language and culture throughout the kingdom.

Ironically, it was in the *Gàidhealtachd* (Gaelic-speaking district), stretching from the south coast of Ireland to the north coast of Scotland, where the Romans had never conquered, that Christianity and the classical learning of Greece and Rome found fertile new soil. Fusing these new intellectual trends with their own traditions of Gaelic learning, Gaels began producing some of the most respected scholars and clerics in the western world. Indeed, at a time when literacy, classical learning, and Christianity had all but disappeared in Dark Age Europe, the *Gàidhealtachd* became an important intellectual and spiritual zone, helping re-establish these traditions throughout Europe. Developing the concept of vernacular as opposed to exclusively classical literary scholarship, Gaels also became the first Europeans since the Greeks and Romans to write in their own language — a tradition of literacy now nearly 1500 years old.

Gaels produced epic narrative prose tales, law tracts, perhaps the oldest law protecting non-combatants in time of war, treatises on history, genealogy, and personal and place names, and poetry on varied subjects, all written in Gaelic. They were also noted scholars in the Christian tradition and did important work in Greek and Latin. Scholars from throughout Britain and the continent flocked to Gaelic centres of learning in places such as Armagh and Clonmacnoise in Ireland as well as to Gaelic institutions in England such as Lindisfarne and Canterbury or to Gaelic centres on the European continent such as Poitiers, Cologne, Vienna, and Verona, to name but a small number, and to Iona in Scotland, one of the most important monastic sites for the western Christian church. Anglo-Saxon scholars such as the Venerable Bede commented on the generosity of Gaelic scholars, and kings from Ireland, Scotland, England, and Norway not only made pilgrimages to Iona but also vied for permission to be laid to rest there. One of these was King Oswald of Northumbria, who was educated at Iona and later invited Bishop Aédan to establish a sister monastery in his kingdom at Lindisfarne to help Christianize his subjects. King Oswald, translating from Gaelic to English the speech of these first Gaelic monks in northern England, remains a famous image. Their arrival at Lindisfarne played an important part in the eventual conversion of England to Christianity.

In the medieval period, Gaelic treatises on language and grammar were unsurpassed in Europe. Indeed, at that time, they had not even been attempted in what are today considered to be some of Europe's oldest and greatest literary languages. As late as the 17th century, Gaelic was the only modern European language in which the complete body of western medical knowledge was systematically taught and analyzed. (Bannerman 1986, 97) This vibrant culture and the centres of learning and religion Gaels founded across the British Isles and the Continent ensured a powerful Gaelic impact on the emerging cultural traditions of Europe following the collapse of Rome.

Within this dynamic Gaelic cultural zone, three distinct nations began to emerge — Ireland, the Isle of Man, and Scotland. As was the case in England, these nations were coalescing out of diverse populations. In Scotland the larger groups included Celtic peoples such as the Gaels, Picts, and Britons and Germanic peoples such as the English and Norse. The Norman French also composed a small but highly influential segment of the population. Originally, the term "Scot" applied only to the Gaels, but it eventually came to include all of these major groups, who happened to fall under the political jurisdiction of the King of Scots. As Scotland emerged as a nation in the medieval period, Gaelic was the language of king, court, commerce, scholarship, and art. Gaelic also managed to penetrate northern English society, as the example of King Oswald and the monastery at Lindisfarne indicated. With the exception of a small section of the nation in the southeast that was never thoroughly Gaelicized — an extension of the extensive Anglo-Saxon territory to the south stretching up the coast through Northumbria as far into Scotland as Edinburgh — Gaelic was also the popular form of speech throughout the Kingdom of the Scots by about the beginning of the second millennium.

The Long Decline

At the very time the Gaels were in the process of bringing "Scotland" into existence and enjoying something of a golden age, the Viking era began in Europe. From the ninth century, most of western Scotland and coastal Ireland came under Viking control, and the Norse language and Scandinavian culture flourished alongside and perhaps, for a time, even dominated its Gaelic counterpart in these occupied coastal areas. It is during this era that we have the first historical evidence of Gaels visiting North America as part of the wider Viking explorations. By the time the Gaels recovered strength and conquered the Vikings in Ireland and western Scotland, several centuries later, the golden age for Gaelic had passed.

The Scottish kingship and court, which eventually took up more or less permanent residence in the southeast of Scotland in Edinburgh, came increasingly under the influence of England, while a period of increased economic prosperity in Europe led to increasing trade between eastern Scotland and the Germanic-speaking countries rimming the North Sea. From this period on, English began to grow in importance in Scotland, particularly in the east and in the Lowlands. By contrast, the west of Scotland, under the descendants of Somerled, the leader who had broken Viking power in the west, saw something of a renaissance of Gaelic culture and a renewal of strong ties with Ireland. Having been largely abandoned during the Viking era, the west of Scotland was moving in different political and cultural directions than the east of the country. The Lordship of the Isles came to represent almost a second kingdom within Scotland. Under the leadership of the Clan Dougall and later the Clan Donald, a semi-democratic council met to decide policy for a large area of western Scotland. Gaelic institutional structures were strongly supported, with poets, clerics, physicians, lawyers, harpers, pipers, metal workers and stone masons all enjoying patronage.

Both areas of Scotland were enjoying a period of cultural growth but in different directions. Gaelic returned to the fore in the west, while English was coming increasingly to the fore in the east. Gaelic was beginning to lose its role as the unifying language and culture of Scotland, and Scotland was beginning to divide culturally and politically between west and east, Highland and Lowland, and Gaelic and English. As home to the Scottish court, the east already held a certain degree of political dominance in Scotland, and as trade links with the North Sea trading countries grew in importance and as improving technology began to unlock the superior potential of its Lowland farming districts, this dominance increased, ensuring that as English grew in importance in the east, it would also become the new language of power in Scotland as a whole. The period of renewed Gaelic vitality in the west, known as the "Age of Prosperity," lasted until about the time Columbus made his voyages to the New World in the late 15th century. By that stage, the Scottish court and the southeast of Scotland had become sufficiently anglicized to see the Lordship of the Isles as a political *and* cultural problem, and after a long period of conflict, the lordship was broken up.

Lacking a stabilizing leadership, the western Highlands and islands plunged into disorder. The clan system, as we know it, emerged as a localized attempt to restore some degree of stability. Patronage for learning, administration, and the arts continued but no longer on the same expansive and integrated manner it had under the lordship. This period, which extended virtually up to the modern era of emigration to Nova Scotia, became known in Gaelic society as the "Age of Forays and Plunderings." Pressure was not limited to Gaelic Scotland, however, as England intensified its centuries-long attempts to conquer Ireland, as well. Under the Tudor monarchs the attacks grew increasingly intense and brutal, resulting, finally, in conquest in 1603. What remained of a Gaelic socio-political system in Ireland collapsed, and the north of Ireland, which had provided the strongest resistance to the English, was heavily planted with English-speaking settlers (many from the Scottish Lowlands) to ensure the repression and assimilation of the native Gaelic population.

This process had a huge impact on the retrenched Gaelic society in the Scottish Highlands and islands, as well, as it helped destroy the integrated system of education that had been shared between Ireland and Gaelic Scotland and severed the close ties that had formerly existed throughout this once-vast Gaelic-speaking zone. Gaelic men of learning had generally received their academic training in Ireland and often apprenticed in the various courts of Gaelic Scotland, but this essentially came to an end in 1603 with the collapse of Gaelic Ireland. The old Gaelic social system was maintained in the Scottish Highlands practically up to the time of migration to the New World but on a much-reduced scale and only at great cost.

By contrast, as unifying structures began to deteriorate in the Gaelic west, they became increasingly powerful and far reaching in the English east. By the 17th century and coincidental with the conquest of Ireland (1603), the separate Scottish and English monarchies were combined and the United Kingdom came into being under one ruler based in England. This was followed in 1707 by the merging of the distinct Scottish and English parliaments into one institution located in London. This process of political union further solidified the position of the English language and culture on the British mainland and consolidated political, military, and economic power in the English-speaking areas. The increasing might of this growing English empire and the increasing disorder and decay of Gaelic society also helped fuel the growing perception in English-speaking areas that English was a language of inherent superiority and destiny, while Gaelic was an inherently crude language and culture, which should be exterminated.

From 1603 on, the United Kingdom instituted a series of policies designed to destroy the "barbaric" Gaelic language of the Highlands and absorb its people politically and culturally. The plantation of English-speaking, Protestant settlers in Northern Ireland was considered as a model for the "civilizing" of the Highlands as well and was even attempted on a very small scale. The infamous Statutes of Iona in 1609 essentially commanded all of the Gaelic leadership in Scotland to send their heirs to the south of Scotland or England to be educated in the English language and Protestant religion. It was, in effect, an early, but in this case ineffectual, version of the residential school system, which would earn such infamy among aboriginal peoples in Canada at a later date. By the time of the Statutes of Iona, the Gaelic language was still spoken over more than half the land mass of Scotland, but it had retreated almost to the border of the Highlands and was coming under increasingly intense pressure.

Gaels in the Highlands largely managed to maintain their cultural independence during the turbulent 17th century, despite the campaign to break up their society and despite the continuing deterioration of the institutional infrastructure of the Highlands. This was probably at least partly attributable to the fact that the authorities in the south most concerned with anglicizing the *Gàidhealtachd* were distracted by bigger problems — civil war, the execution of King Charles I, the restoration of Charles II, and eventually the "Glorious Rebellion" of the late 17th century, which saw the Stewart Dynasty dethroned permanently. With a new monarchy in place, repression of Gaelic renewed.

The 18th century was marked by continuing policies aimed at breaking up Gaelic society and more famously by Gaelic involvement in the periodic Jacobite risings designed to restore the Stewart monarchs. The dynastic struggle between the Jacobites and the

Hanoverians came to a fateful end at the Battle of Culloden in 1746, the last battle ever fought on British soil. It provided the opportunity, a secure dynasty in place after generations of war and uncertainty, and the excuse, supposed Gaelic rebelliousness, to finally effectively suppress the Gaels of the Scottish Highlands.

In the aftermath of Culloden, Gaels were forbidden by law to carry weapons of any sort or to wear their distinctive Highland clothing. The power of their chiefs to dispense justice was also removed by law, and patronage for the Gaelic arts, long in decline, was effectively ended with the dismantling of the traditional relationship between chief and clan. What remained of an educational and ecclesiastical infrastructure was to be rebuilt on southern models and with a strong emphasis on cultural and linguistic assimilation. Efforts to repress the Gaelic language through education were redoubled and made much more effective.

The clan system was broken up and a new economic system introduced based on southern commercial land-holding models. Chiefs, long the target of assimilation, were to be the thin edge of the wedge, being encouraged to trade their role as leaders of the clan for that of landlords. Gaels were to be turned from "clansmen" with customary rights and obligations within a distinct society to "tenants" who had, in effect, no rights regarding access to land and who could be charged rent at virtually any price their landlords saw fit or "cleared" from their ancestral holdings at the whim of those same landholders. The displacement of people that followed was the beginning of the Highland clearances and of Gaelic emigration to Nova Scotia.

Gaelic Settlement of Nova Scotia

Ancient Connections

Gaels may have the longest and most enduring connection with Nova Scotia of any immigrant group. According to legend, the same spirit that led Irish monks to settle in the Faeroe Islands and in Iceland before the Vikings also brought them on early exploratory voyages to the eastern seaboard of North America some 1200 years ago or more. These monks were inspired by a spirit of seeking God in remote places in a manner akin to that of hermits. The Old Norse sagas state that the Norse found traces of Irish monks in Iceland when they arrived. It is not until the arrival of the Vikings, however, that we have hard evidence of European exploration and settlement in the New World. While many may be aware of the scholarly claims that Nova Scotia was a likely area of early Norse exploration, fewer are aware of the Gaelic connection.

The age of Viking exploration in North America was also the era of Viking occupation of much of coastal Ireland and western and northern Scotland. Viking explorers provisioned and outfitted their ships in the Western Isles of Scotland; they followed the early westward path of the Gaelic explorers to the Faeroes and Iceland; and the Icelandic sagas specifically mention by name two Gaels who were dispatched to explore the interior of Vinland on at least one Viking expedition. As important, most of the prominent Norse families actively engaged in North American exploration were of Gaelic as well as Norse ancestry, having intermarried with the leading families of Ireland and western Scotland over many generations. Whatever Gaelic contact was made with Nova Scotia in this distant era, it did not result in permanent settlement. Scottish Gaelic contact would not be resumed until centuries later when successful permanent attempts at European colonization were finally made in the New World.

The first attempt at specifically Scottish colonization did not occur until the turbulent 17th century. Sir William Alexander of Scotland was awarded the right to settle *Acadie* by King James I. This colony was renamed *Nova Scotia* in 1621 and was to border New England to the south much like Scotland and England in the United Kingdom. The ruling elite of the newly forged United Kingdom initially looked favourably upon the prospect of a Scottish colony in the New World, especially if it might be used to induce the difficult to subdue Scottish Highlanders to leave the British Isles. Scottish settlements were established in the Annapolis Valley and in Cape Breton, but Gaelic involvement appears to have been slight in the ventures, and the maneuvering of colonial superpowers very quickly dashed these early efforts. In spite of ostensibly being a partner in the new United Kingdom, Scotland did not enjoy very high priority at court in England, and the colony of "New Scotland" was generously returned to the French in order to protect England's more vital interests elsewhere. The settlements were broken up and abandoned, but a few Scottish settlers are believed to have joined the Acadian communities already established in the Annapolis Valley. The Scottish settlers at Baleine, just east of Louisbourg, were pressed into service, following their capture in 1629, to help build a French fortification at St. Anne's Bay, coincidentally, not far from the present-day Gaelic College, but no settlers are believed to have remained in the area.

Nova Scotia remained a French possession until the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 when most of the mainland was ceded to Britain. Île Royale (Cape Breton) and Île St-Jean (Prince Edward Island) remained in French possession following the treaty. It was not until after the founding of Halifax in 1749, however, that the British began to gain a stranglehold on the province, and a very localized small-scale settlement was initiated. Nova Scotia did not open up for large-scale British colonization until after the conclusion of the Seven Years' War, which ended with the Peace of Paris in 1763. This finished French colonial ambitions in North America, and all of her significant settlements in New France and Atlantic Canada were turned over to Britain. The disputed western territory of mainland Nova Scotia (later to become New Brunswick) as well as Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton were merged with British peninsular Nova Scotia to become a fully fledged colony of Britain. The colony retained its old Latin name — Nova Scotia — and was opened for settlement. Coincidentally, Scottish Gaels would be among the earliest and largest ethnic groups to settle in the new province.

The Highland Clearances and Emigration

It was in the second half of the 18th century that a series of social forces conspired to finally initiate large-scale, full-time Gaelic settlement in Nova Scotia. The most important of these was the accelerated decline of Gaelic society following the Jacobite Rising of 1745. Gaels had long been under intense external political and cultural pressure, but in the post-1745 era, government was able, with much greater effect, to institute a new series of repressive measures designed to break up their unique social organization and undermine their cultural solidarity. More immediately threatening, a massive reorganization of the local economy was also begun. Rents were quickly and dramatically increased, lands were confiscated and long-established roles, customs, rights, and obligations abandoned.

The value of land had previously been its ability to support a large, robust community. In the new socio-economic regime, it was transformed solely into a commercial commodity designed to provide maximum profit for those at the very top of the local social structure — the land-holding and increasingly anglicized clan chiefs. Rents were increased beyond the former productive value of the land, and people were cleared from the best holdings in the Highlands in order that estates could establish larger consolidated farming operations that could produce a higher economic return. A substantial part of the logic behind clearance was also to create a large landless population with limited options for the pursuit of a livelihood who could then be compelled to provide cheap labour on various envisioned industrial schemes on the landlords' estates. As a result, most landlords, particularly in the regions from which Nova Scotian settlers emigrated, and particularly in the first half-century of the clearances, actively opposed emigration and, in so doing, they had the full support of government, which had an active fear of depopulation in Britain.

In the face of such powerfully placed opposition, it took considerable determination to get to the New World, and it is hardly surprising to find that early Gaelic poetic accounts of the migration process, as well as a host of other sources, are charged with this sense of defiance, independence, and hope for freedom and a better life. The accounts clearly demonstrate that the early Gaelic immigrants *chose* to leave Scotland and that many considered Nova Scotia a promising place in which to make a new home. The desire to make a fresh start away from Scotland was particularly evident among the natural leaders of Gaelic society — the *tacksmen* — the educated middle class who had fulfilled roles as military officers, administrators, hereditary musical artists, poets, judges, clerics, teachers, and the like. They were the first to be squeezed out of any meaningful place in the new socio-economic order of the Highlands, and they began to look to the potential of the New World. They would serve as the catalyst and important nucleus for the first permanent Gaelic settlements in North America.

This process of migration is important to note, because it partly explains the strength of the Gaelic community in the New World, particularly in Nova Scotia. As a rule, Gaels did not immigrate as individuals in haphazard fashion to any particular destination that happened to be convenient. Nor is it the case that an impoverished underclass of Gaelic society found itself swept out of Scotland and deposited in what happened to be the closest and, therefore, cheapest New World destination at the whim of others and against their own will. In general, Gaels emigrated in extended family groups, most often accompanied by close friends and neighbours, and in the main with a fairly clear intent of re-establishing entire communities in rural districts of the New World. Everyone emigrated — the poor and the comparatively well off. It was a community migration in the truest sense of the word.

The tacksmen had the capital, education, and administrative experience necessary to get this process under way in the difficult early era of migration, when much of the potential territory for settlement was virgin woodland, and transportation to and communication with the New World was still very primitive. However, once they put their organizational and financial muscle to the wheel, the rest of the community pitched in its strength, resulting in a remarkably complete transfer of the old social structure and, by extension, the old culture to the New World. In some important respects, the new communities would find in the New World a more conducive environment for continued cultural evolution than the parent communities in the Highlands

The first pioneers from the Scottish Highlands in the 18th century were coming to a land that had very little in the way of established European settlement, but they could rely on a fairly robust support network from amongst their own numbers that differed very little from what they had been accustomed to in the Highlands. Although the bulk of the population in these pioneer settlements were involved in small-scale farming and fishing and, to a lesser extent, work in several trades, they could often draw on the expertise of administrators, clerics and teachers, musicians and poets, doctors, farmers, fishermen, soldiers, midwives, healers, and, almost without exception, close family. Once established, the first settlers sent accounts back to their home communities in the Highlands, encouraging relatives, friends, and former neighbours to join them, beginning a process of chain migration that effectively recreated, and for many generations after initial settlement, refreshed, the large Old World communities in the new North American environment.

Contrary to the popular image of the "cleared" Highlander — poverty-stricken, overwhelmed by misfortune, lurching from one disaster to the next and lamenting for Scotland all the while — the evidence from these New World communities suggests that Gaelic pioneers were generally an upbeat, highly motivated people, eager to take advantage not only of the great material potential of the New World but also of the freedom it offered. That is not to say that the process of migration and pioneering could not be attended by sadness and even tragedy, but Nova Scotia's famous scientist Abraham Gesner, who had extensive experience with pioneer communities working as a surveyor, considered that no other immigrant group took on the challenges associated with this tough pioneering life with as cheerful an outlook as the Gaels.

Settlement Begins

The main thrust of Gaelic settlement in Nova Scotia occurred between 1770 and 1840. A certain amount of limited Highland settlement in the New World had begun as early as 1735 (particularly in Georgia), but heavy settlement did not get under way until after the Peace of Paris in 1763. The fall of New France not only opened up vast new territories for settlement, it brought important first-hand accounts of the New World back to Scotland and provided a particular impetus for emigration and settlement. Soldiers in the various Highland Regiments that had campaigned in North America during the Seven Years' War saw much of the northeastern part of the continent, including mainland Nova Scotia, Cape Breton Island, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Quebec, and several American colonies, perhaps most important of those, New York. After the Peace of Paris, grants of land were made available in Quebec, New York, and Nova Scotia to the disbanding Highland Regiments. This encouragement, coupled with the deteriorating economic situation in Scotland, led to what alarmed observers, fearful of depopulation, described as a "rage for emigration" in the Highlands by the 1770s.

Three particularly large and significant settlements were founded at this time in North Carolina, New York, and Nova Scotia. All three settlements showed the same broad cross-section of Gaelic society and were organized by Gaelic tacksmen. The largest of the first settlements was in North Carolina thanks to active recruitment by the governor of that colony. It is estimated that as many as 50,000 Gaels settled the Cape Fear Valley starting from about 1770. A large and intensely Gaelic region developed in North Carolina, but the state suffered an enormous mortality rate and devastating social dislocation during and following the American Civil War in the 1860s, from whence Gaelic appears to have gone into rapid decline. Although no longer Gaelic speaking, the descendants of those Highland settlers remain, to this day, keenly aware of their Gaelic ancestry.

The second important settlement was in the Mohawk Valley of New York, along one of the most important routes of communication between the Atlantic seaboard and the St. Lawrence Valley along which Highland Regiments had travelled during the Seven Years' War. This community was first settled in 1773, just as tensions between America and Britain were about to boil over into outright warfare. Like their North Carolina counterparts, these immigrant Gaels found themselves in the middle of the American War of Independence before they had scarcely had a chance to brush the dust off their feet. Unlike the North Carolina Gaels, who were marginalized very early on by American forces, the Highland settlers of the Mohawk Valley played an effective part in the war on the British side, and their home district was one of the most hotly contested pieces of real estate in the Americas. Following the cessation of hostilities, the community was re-established in 1784 as a Loyalist settlement in Glengarry Township in present-day eastern Ontario. The people in this region had strong links to some of the Highland settlement districts in Nova Scotia and strongly maintained their Gaelic language and associated folk music until only a couple of generations ago. Here, too, the people remain keenly aware of their Gaelic ancestry.

Gaelic Nova Scotia

Settlement Begins

The third major Gaelic settlement in the New World, and destined to become the most significant, was in Nova Scotia. Probably in excess of 50,000 Gaels immigrated to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, establishing a large, distinct Gaelic community that has preserved its Gaelic language and many of its distinct customs and traditions to the present day. These settlers began appearing from the earliest days of British involvement in Nova Scotia and settled from one end of the province to another: sailors and soldiers posted to Halifax; disbanded soldiers in Douglas Township in Hants County, central Nova Scotia; Loyalists in Shelburne along Nova Scotia's South Shore, like Donald MacCrimmon of the legendary dynasty of pipers and Flora MacDonald, famous protector of Bonnie Prince Charlie; and many others scattered throughout the province. It was only in the east, however, that a truly Gaelic community would develop.

Settlement began almost immediately after the Peace of Paris in 1763. Disbanded soldiers from the 78th Fraser's Highlanders were granted an 80,000-acre (32000 ha) land grant along the north shore of the Island of St. John following their success on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 and appear to have begun settling by 1764. Unfortunately, details of this settlement are extremely sparse. Five years after these first Gaelic settlers arrived in Nova Scotia, the Island of St. John was divided from the rest of the province to become an independent province in its own right. It would be renamed Prince Edward Island some 30 years later. Scots (mostly from the Highlands) would be the largest ethnic group in Prince Edward Island for most of its recorded history.

The early settlement of these disbanded soldiers in Prince Edward Island does not appear to have been particularly large — most of the land grant was not taken up — but it was the catalyst for very heavy settlement in the Maritimes. It is not clear whether the presence of these settlers was in any way responsible for encouraging two expeditions to Prince Edward Island in 1770 from Argyll and Perthshire, respectively, but according to historical tradition in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, letters and accounts sent back to the Highlands by the Fraser's Highlanders were responsible for encouraging others to try their luck establishing settlements in the region, particularly the prominent Clanranald tacksman John MacDonald of Glenaladale. MacDonald founded a very large and influential settlement in Prince Edward Island in 1772, composed of immigrants primarily from Moidart, the Small Isles, South Uist, and Barra.

Secondary migration from Glenaladale's large pioneer Catholic community was important in the early settlement of Antigonish County but perhaps even more so for Cape Breton. The success of these early settlements in Prince Edward Island (which contradicted the dire predictions of disaster issued by anti-emigration Scottish landlords) also resulted in more positive accounts being sent home encouraging others to come. This encouraged further migration not only to Prince Edward Island but also directly to Nova Scotia, which had a more amenable land-granting system. (It was nearly impossible for small free holders to get land in Prince Edward Island, as all of the land had been granted in 20,000-acre (8000 ha) lots to prominent British citizens, who were intended to rent it out in smaller parcels. Nova Scotia, by contrast, had large areas of Crown lands available for grant and purchase.) When recruiters were attempting to convince Scottish Gaels to emigrate to Pictou aboard the *Hector* in 1773, the proximity of Pictou to Prince Edward Island (and its successful Highland settlements) was prominently mentioned in advertisements. That advertising was successful, and the *Hector* set sail for Nova Scotia with a large cargo of Gaels, beginning the story of Gaelic settlement in what is today Nova Scotia.

Pictou County

Of the eastern counties that would become home to the large distinctive Gaelic-speaking community in Nova Scotia, Pictou was the first to receive heavy settlement. It would also become an important receiving and jumping off point for many settlers bound for other parts of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. The first Highland immigrants to Pictou began arriving in 1773 and came primarily from the mainland of Scotland — areas such as Sutherland, Ross-shire, Perthshire, and eastern Invernesshire — and were mostly Protestant.

The very first arrivals, the settlers aboard the *Hector*, endured a difficult first year, owing largely to the failure of the Philadelphia Company, which organized the settlement, to deliver the promised front-land settlement lots and winter supplies, and the settlement was in grave danger of failure. However, enough of the immigrants persevered to provide the all-important nucleus for what would become a very large and prosperous community. This first settlement received an early boost thanks to the decision made to grant lands in the area in 1783 to disbanded soldiers from the 82nd Hamilton Regiment and from the 84th Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment, which had been raised from immigrant Highlanders (and others) during the American War of Independence. The Pictou County grant was much preferred to a similar grant offered in Douglas Township in central Hants County, which suffered from poor-quality land and a difficult inland location.

Pictou was a naturally advantageous site for settlement. It had the only good harbour along the gulf coast of Nova Scotia, a large river system, which gave convenient access deep into the interior of the county, and abundant front lands. Such lands generally possessed superior agricultural potential and enjoyed a serious transportation advantage over backlands. They were keenly sought by early settlers — particularly Highlanders who had an especially strong attachment to rural life and an especially strong desire for the independence associated with outright land ownership. Gaelic communities very quickly spread out along the river systems and along the sea coast, east towards Antigonish County and west into Colchester and Cumberland counties. This highly dispersed, rural-based settlement pattern would be typical of all Highland settlement in Nova Scotia.

By 1805 the prime lots of front land in Pictou County were largely occupied thanks to natural population increase and to the sporadic but intense bursts of emigration that coincided with the brief periods of peace during the Napoleonic wars in Europe. Good land was still available in the interior of the county, and it would continue to attract emigrants from the Highlands particularly from 1815 — the result of eased travel restrictions following the end of the Napoleonic wars and a subsequent depression that struck the Highland economy. By the early 1820s most of this good land in Pictou County was occupied, but settlement continued on the more marginal lots as smaller waves of immigrants were still arriving through the 1830s.

Pictou County grew quickly and became one of the most populous and prosperous areas of Nova Scotia in the early 19th century thanks to its harbour, its good agricultural lands, the development of its large coalfields, and its consequent emergence as an important industrialized, urban service centre for northeastern Nova Scotia. It became not only an important Gaelic settlement area in its own right, due to continuing chain migration, but also an important port of entry for other Gaelic immigrants en route to Antigonish County, Cape Breton, and Prince Edward Island. However, while Gaels dominated the population of the county as a whole. English speakers would dominate its burgeoning urban environment, and this would have serious cultural repercussions for Gaels in the region as the 19th century wore on.

Antigonish County

Antigonish County also enjoyed early Gaelic settlement. Small-scale settlement had begun with the same disbanding regiments that took up land grants in Pictou County in the early 1780s. Large numbers of Highland settlers began arriving independently, often via Pictou, from 1790 onward. Although there was early representation from areas such as Barra and South Uist, Antigonish, like Pictou County, would become an area of largely mainland Scottish settlement. Unlike the Pictou settlers, these immigrants came mainly from Strathglas, Lochaber, Moidart, and Morar, in Invernesshire, predominantly Catholic regions of the Highlands. This, in part, explains why they so quickly moved east to a separate settlement district rather than choosing the good land that was still readily available in Pictou County in the late 18th and early 19th century. Attempting to settle in discrete districts with others of the same religion and from the same district of Scotland (often with the same clan affiliations) was also typical of Highland settlement throughout Nova Scotia.

The Antigonish immigrants quickly spread east from Pictou down the gulf coast and up the inland waterways such as the South River. Arisaig, along the gulf coast, was an especially important area of this early settlement and would remain the most important Gaelic region in mainland Nova Scotia. Settlers in Antigonish had especially strong familial and regional connections with the large and earlier Glenaladale settlement in Prince Edward Island, also from the Catholic Highlands, and there is considerable evidence of movement back and forth between the two areas well into the 19th century. Due to the difficulty of finding freehold land in Prince Edward Island, this usually entailed movement from the island to Nova Scotia. Heavy settlement occurred in

Antigonish County during the first decade of the 19^{th} century, and by the 1820s most of the Gaelic districts were well established.

Antigonish was not as well favoured with resources as neighbouring Pictou County. It did not have a particularly good harbour, its agricultural lands were of roughly the same quality but not as extensive, and it lacked any appreciable mineral deposits, and so remained an almost entirely rural district. Antigonish Town would become the centre for the Catholic Diocese of Eastern Nova Scotia and home to St. Francis Xavier University, both of which would contribute heavily to the district's prosperity and influence but which would also exert an anglicizing influence on Gaels in the area. The assimilative effects would not be as strong as those resulting from early industrialization and urbanization in neighbouring Pictou County but were still significant.

Cape Breton

Cape Breton was destined to become the largest and most durable Gaelic settlement district in Nova Scotia, but settlement was a bit slower to get under way than it was on the mainland. Gaels explored the possibilities of settlement in Cape Breton virtually as early as they had on the mainland of Nova Scotia, and settlement was begun in at least one district prior to the end of the 18^{th} century, but it would not be until the early 19^{th} century that settlement would begin in earnest. As in Pictou and Antigonish counties there were few significant settlements in place prior to the arrival of the first Highland settlers, and as a result, the region was from the outset a predominantly Gaelic one.

The first settlement in Cape Breton was founded by Prince Edward Islanders who were unable to get clear title to freehold land on their own island. Michael MacDonald, who had initially immigrated to Prince Edward Island in 1771 or 1772, wintered in Judique on the west coast of Cape Breton in 1775 and later returned to found a permanent settlement there in 1790. The earlier Gaelic settlements in Prince Edward Island would provide the impetus or nucleus for many of the early settlements on Cape Breton in just such a fashion.

By 1801, lands were being settled in the Grand Narrows district by immigrants from Barra who had heard about potential sites along the Bras d'Or lakes from Barra men who had fought at Louisbourg during the Seven Years' War. The first of the new settlers wintered among countrymen in Antigonish County before moving on to their lands in central Cape Breton. They would be followed by more Barra people in 1802, the first Gaels to migrate directly to Cape Breton. Highland immigration to Cape Breton was fairly steady during these first two decades but intensified during the 1820s. It continued on through the 1830s and, at a much-diminished rate, until mid-century.

Settlement up until the mid-19^{th} century was quite late by Nova Scotian standards and areas settled during that time proved to be not nearly so stable and successful as districts settled earlier. Most of the immigrants arriving from the 1840s on were forced to settle on backlands with poorer soils and poorer communications and often on higher elevation with a shorter growing season. Very few of the backland communities in Nova Scotia lasted very long under these difficult conditions. The main strength of the Gaelic community in Cape Breton, as on the mainland, would be found along the earlier settled front lands — the shores and river intervals — but the continuing arrival of considerable numbers of immigrants from the Highlands right up until mid-century undoubtedly helped to refresh the strength of the Gaelic presence in Cape Breton as a whole. It should also be noted that a small colony from Cape Breton was established in the Codroy Valley of southwestern Newfoundland in the mid-19th century and that Gaelic was still spoken there until a generation ago.

The majority of the Highland immigrants to Cape Breton came primarily from the Catholic mainland of Scotland, from the Catholic islands of Barra and South Uist. A slightly smaller proportion came from the Protestant islands of Skye, North Uist, Harris, Lewis, Tiree, Mull, Coll, and Rum. These old world regional and religious affiliations were strongly maintained in Cape Breton as they were in other North American Highland settlements. Cape Breton would prove to be the most staunchly Gaelic district of the large eastern Nova Scotian *Gàidhealtachd*.

Gaelic in 19th-Century Nova Scotia

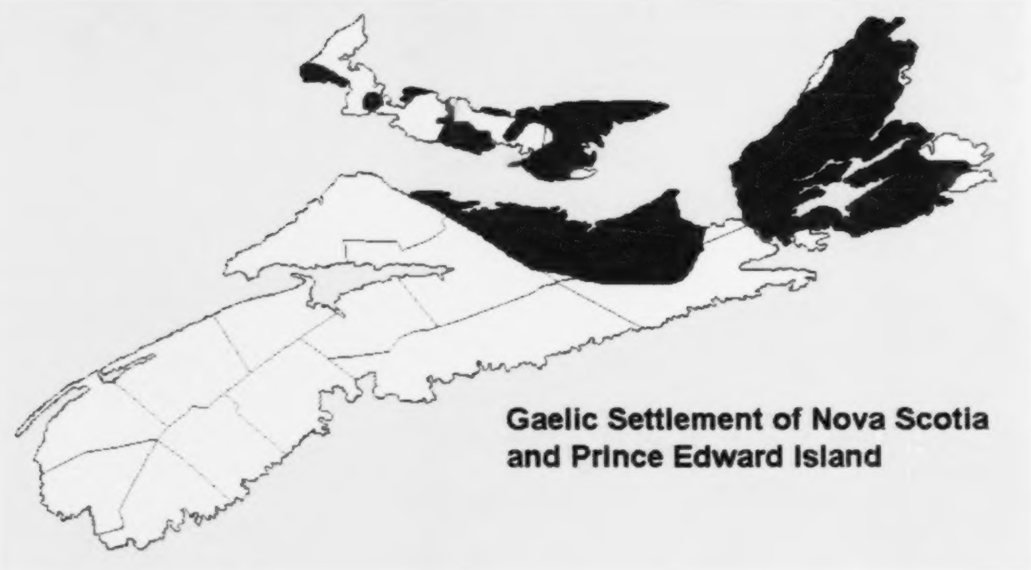
By the mid-19th century, the pioneering era in Nova Scotia was drawing to a close, and most of the province's major communities had been established. It was very much a multicultural and multilingual province at that time. In addition to large English settlements (predominantly on the province's prime agricultural lands), there were significant settlements of French speakers in the counties of Richmond, Inverness, Antigonish, Digby, and Yarmouth, as well as a smaller settlement east of Halifax. German was the predominant language of Lunenburg County. Less-common languages, such as Irish Gaelic, were found in discrete but important pockets throughout Nova Scotia, especially in and around urban centres such as Halifax, Sydney, and Louisbourg. Mi'kmaq was spoken in small pockets throughout the rural districts of the province. Scottish Gaelic was found throughout Nova Scotia, but most especially in the east where it dominated a third of the province.

Lacking good census data from the period, it is difficult to say with certainty just how close in size the number of Gaelic and English mother-tongue speakers were in the province as a whole in the 19th century, but it is abundantly apparent that Gaelic was no small drop in an otherwise English sea. The most populous and heavily funded educational district in the province in 1841 was the predominantly Highland Scottish county of Pictou (*Statutes of Nova Scotia*, 1841, Chap. 43, Section 14). By 1871, Scots temporarily replaced the English as the largest ethnic group in Nova Scotia as a whole, and most Scots who immigrated to Nova Scotia appear to have been Gaelic speaking. While there were large English-speaking settlements in Nova Scotia, over a substantial part of the province, particularly the Gaelic east, and from an early period, English was a discrete minority language.

The dominance of the Gaelic language in eastern Nova Scotia extended from the borders of Colchester County in the west well into Cape Breton County in the east and reached to all aspects of life. The difficulties faced by English speakers in such an environment were highlighted in an 1857 petition from English speakers in the vicinity of New Annan, Colchester County, to be separated from the municipality of Earltown due to their minority language status. They had to pay their poor rates to Earltown and have their town officers approved by the residents of that district, which they argued was decidedly unfair to their interests since they could not "well transact business with the inhabitants of Earltown as it is generally done in the Gaelic language." (RG 5; Series P; Vol. 16; #28 "Petition from Inhabitants of Electoral District No. 8 in New Annan, 1857)

A more telling example of the regional dominance of Gaelic (and the lack of official interest in accommodating Gaelic educational needs) appeared in an 1845 petition to the House of Assembly submitted by the editor of the *Spirit of the Times* newspaper of Sydney. He pointed out that the vast majority of the settlers in Cape Breton were Highlanders and not familiar with North American colonial agricultural techniques and that "5/6" of the population of Cape Breton were unacquainted with English, the only language in which provincial agricultural pamphlets were published. He was careful to point out that he was not an advocate of multiculturalism (a recurring theme in documents of that century) and that he did not support the encouragement of diverse languages in a what was clearly an "English" province but that he felt, nonetheless, that Nova Scotian Gaels, numbering "not less than 100,000," by his estimate, deserved the same opportunities for advancement as their English brethren. He argued (unsuccessfully, it appears) for a 300-page agricultural manual adapted specifically to the "uniqueness of this population, translated into the Gaelic language" to be made available gratis in rural districts. (RG 5 Series P; Vol. 53, #32)

The editor of the *Spirit of the Times* was undoubtedly a bit wide of the mark in his estimate of the number of Gaels in Cape Breton in 1845, since it is unlikely that there were 100,000 Gaelic speakers in the entire province even at the language's peak, but his contention that the vast majority of the population of the island was Gaelic speaking was corroborated by the Department of Education's own reports. The report for Cape Breton County (one of the least Gaelic of the eastern counties of Nova Scotia) reported 22 years later, that it was indispensable to have a Gaelic-speaking teacher in at least half the schools of the county, as the children were "utterly unacquainted with English." The inspector indicated that this was not the case in the urban districts, such as Sydney, but was particularly so in the rural areas. (*Report of the Superintendent of Education: Inspector's Reports*, 1867; Cape Breton County, Edmund Outram, p. 59)



Gaelic Settlement of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

The Status of Gaelic in the 19th Century

Language and Culture in Canada

It is relatively easy to plot the extent of Gaelic settlement on a map of Nova Scotia but considerably more difficult to determine its significance and to trace its path to the present day. In part, this is due to the murky status of language and culture in Canada as a whole in the face of some powerful cultural myths — most notably, biculturalism. Canada prides itself on being a liberal, multicultural society but with its historical identity rooted primarily in "two founding cultures" — an English majority and a smaller but older French minority — who have lived together in mutual tolerance for centuries. According to this model, the French and English form the ethnic bedrock of Canadian society, but it is a model whose historical accuracy has been widely disputed. Aboriginal people have understandably found the whole idea of founding nations offensive, but it is perhaps Scottish Gaels who are most fundamentally lost to history in this paradigm and who best reveal the most critical flaw inherent in the concept of two founding "cultural" groups in Canada.

Prior to the fall of Acadia and New France, the population of the territory that would eventually coalesce into Canada in the 19th century was primarily French and aboriginal. After the fall, new migration from Britain supposedly established the English half of the bicultural nation. However, this British immigration was composed of largely equal proportions of Scots (who had also been the largest minority in New France prior to the fall), Irish, and English. But far from comprising a single cultural group, as the bicultural model insists, this British population was a mix of different ethnicities, languages, legal traditions, and religions. Even the political structures that united them (and would now be used to govern French Canadians) were relatively new and fluid. In the case of Ireland, in particular, they had never been accepted and were, ultimately, doomed to fail. Reducing these various languages and cultures to one — English — cannot be justified, but it is upon just such a process of cultural and linguistic revisionism that the Canadian founding cultures model and to a certain extent, Canadian identity, is based. The actual cultural history of immigration is quite different

From the earliest days of the British regime in Canada, Scottish Gaels established large, important communities from the Atlantic to the Prairies as settlement moved slowly westward. In Prince Edward Island, Scots (mostly of Gaelic stock) nearly outnumbered all other ethnic groups combined. In Nova Scotia, they were in a virtual dead heat with English settlers for the status of largest ethnic group and, again, were predominantly of Gaelic origin. In Upper Canada (later, the province of Ontario), Scottish Gaels formed a large, influential minority from the earliest days of settlement, and in Lower Canada (later, Quebec) and New Brunswick, smaller Scottish Gaelic settlements could be found scattered throughout the region. Scottish Gaels were also very well represented in the early exploration of the Canadian west and would be among the first immigrants to settle the prairies.

Far from being considered part of the wave of "English" settlement at the time, Scottish Gaels were recognized as a highly distinctive cultural group. Indeed, at the turn of the 18^{th} and 19^{th} centuries, one prominent British nobleman, Lord Selkirk, argued that Gaels (either Irish or Scottish) should be specifically recruited for settlement for that very reason. There was considerable concern in Britain that the American colonies, which had successfully rebelled a generation earlier, were now planning to seduce or conquer the Canadian settlements to the north. Selkirk argued that Gaels, with their fighting skills and strong, distinctive culture, would not only be capable of countering American force of arms but would also be highly resistant to cultural assimilation, since they neither spoke the English language nor shared the same cultural touchstones as New Englanders. This, it was argued, would help establish a network of culturally distinctive communities well disposed to protect the independence of Canada from American incursion and influence.

British authorities did not take up Selkirk's plan but immigration from the Scottish Highlands from the 18^{th} century onward was nonetheless sufficiently large to make Scottish Gaelic Canada's third most commonly spoken language almost to the dawn of the 20^{th} century. Remarkably, however, within Canada's "two founding nations" model, a cultural group once considered nearly antithetical to North American "English" culture has been redefined as somehow *inherently* English. As an ethnic group, Scottish Gaels quite simply do not exist within the context of Canadian cultural history. Consider how easily their distinctive language and culture have been wiped from the pages of Canada's past in the following excerpts from the Canadian Ethnic Studies Association Series publication, *The Canadian Ethnic Mosaic: A Quest for Identity*:

> At the time of Confederation, the British and French in Upper and Lower Canada and the Maritimes (representing almost 90 per cent of the population) formed a bi-lingual and bi-cultural nation, with few representatives from other countries. (Dreidger 1978, 13)

Repeating the fundamental error of mistaking the descriptive category "British" as a cultural or linguistic grouping rather than as a term describing citizens of a political state composed of several distinct nations, languages, and cultures (and which, it could be argued, included French Canadians after 1763), this study of Canadian identity recorded as historical fact that 90 per cent of Canadians in the period leading up to Confederation could be divided into only two "founding" languages and cultures — English and French. It pointed out that the British North America Act of 1867:

> Gave the founding groups of Canada (British and French) what has been termed by some as Charter Group status. The Act legalized the claims of the two original migrating groups for such historically established privileges as the perpetuation of their separate languages and cultures. (Dreidger 1978, 12–13)

In a subsection of the introduction entitled, "The Maritimes: Anglophones and Anglo-culturalism" (which, incidentally, incorrectly located Newfoundland within the Maritimes), the claim was made even more explicit, creating a picture of the once strongly Gaelic provinces of Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia as historically English places in which the Gaelic language and culture seems never to have existed at all:

> The three most easterly Atlantic provinces (Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island) represent British unilingualism and uniculturalism, ninety-five per cent of the residents in the area speak English at home. Their long history is largely British, and demographically they are British. (Dreidger 1978, 12)

Within such a model the perilous state of Scottish Gaelic in Canada today hardly seems worth considering at all. According to the "two founding nations" model, even though attitudes toward minority languages and cultures in Canada have been historically liberal, little accommodation could have been expected for such a small language group in a country where 90 per cent of the population was either English or French and the remaining ten per cent constituted an almost amazingly diverse cultural mosaic. Gaels simply adapted to an overwhelmingly English or French environment depending on where they settled. The problem, of course, is that the model does not actually demonstrate that 90 per cent of the population was *English* or French but rather *British* or French. It is fundamentally paradoxical that this large Canadian Gaelic community has been made an essential part of a cultural equation whose conclusion is equally dependent on their never having really existed.

This error in perception is not entirely accidental. English authorities had long expressly indicated the need to eliminate the Celtic languages and cultures and, ultimately, any sort of independent Celtic identity in the British Isles, in order to break those societies up and bring them under the political control of England. By the time New France fell to Britain in 1763, the last Celtic-speaking regions of England were being linguistically absorbed and the Celtic languages in Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and the Isle of Man had been destabilized. Although much (indeed, taken together, the large majority) of the population in these nations remained stubbornly Welsh or Gaelic speaking, the languages were all in decline. They had long since been pushed from official life, losing any official status they once enjoyed, and were noticeably weak, if not entirely vanished as native languages from the wealthier rural districts and from the urban centres of power (the latter being less true of Welsh). In the 18th century, even the use of the name "Scotland" was discouraged in favour of "North Britain" (England, by contrast, was to remain England). A Britain with a singularly English identity was the expressed goal of the British political elite, and a combination of denial, description, and intense pressure to assimilate would be used in pursuit of that end.

This brings us to the second myth that so badly confuses the picture of Gaelic experience in Canada — and that is the degree to which Canadian society tolerated or encouraged non-English cultures. The popular belief in mainstream English Canadian society today is that an English majority has been very tolerant of a wide variety of cultural minorities but most especially tolerant of French. The fact that French Canadians are viewed as an ethnic minority, when, in fact, they have always been Canada's largest ethnic group, perhaps best demonstrates how skewed that viewpoint is and how deeply it is influenced by assimilation. However important biculturalism or multiculturalism might eventually become to Canadians, it is impossible to trace it to any pro-multicultural philosophy that was in place in Britain when Canada was founded.

A distinct French society presented the same perceived threat to easy governance in Canada as distinct Celtic societies did in Britain and Ireland and was certainly not something to be encouraged. In Acadia, this obstacle was dealt with swiftly and brutally; 10,000 Acadians were simply expelled from their ancestral homes in the 1750s and their communities destroyed to make way for more acceptable settlers. In New France, however, the massive population demanded more cautious measures. The goal of anglicization remained, but it would need to be attempted more subtly and more slowly. It was this practical necessity rather than any positive multicultural philosophy that would allow the French language and culture in Canada to survive and even flourish.

The pragmatic realization that French Canadians could not be subjected to the same intense assimilation pressures that were being exerted against the Welsh and the Gaels was rooted in the fear of losing the newly won territory altogether. In the wake of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, which ceded Nova Scotia from France to Britain, the early colonial officials actually pleaded with authorities in Britain not to remove the Acadian population. They argued that the number of English settlers was insufficient to keep the economy going and to supply food and goods for the armed forces and government. They also understood that hostile action against the Acadians would likely incite the still powerful Mi'kmaq, who had a long-standing friendship with them. Governor Phillips wrote in 1718 that the French should "not be treated as they deserve" (in other words, dispossessed) until Britain had sufficient settlers in Nova Scotia to deal with the Indian "problem." Once the settlers felt secure, Acadian expulsion could go ahead.

In New France, British authorities faced all the same problems but on a much more daunting scale. The Articles of Capitulation of 1759 and the Peace of Paris of 1763 did obligate them to respect certain rights of the large French population (including what was left of the Acadians), but these in themselves would not have been difficult to emasculate or even effectively undo, as the instructions to Governor Murray in 1763 revealed. More important was the growing realization that the envisioned massive influx of English settlers and the concomitant economic boom was not going to happen. Apart from a miniscule cadre of military, political, and church officials from Britain and merchants, primarily from New England, who had quickly moved north to fill the vacuum created by the dispossession of their French counterparts, the bulk of the population of Quebec was overwhelmingly French, and it was on their shoulders that the success of the colony would rest. Colonial officials realized this at an early stage:

> Having arrayed the Strength of His Majesty's old [English] and new [French] Subjects, and shown the great superiority of the Latter, it may not be amiss to observe, that there is not the least Probability, this present Superiority should ever diminish. On the Contrary, 'tis more than probable it will increase and strengthen daily: (Governor Guy Carleton to Colonial Secretary, Lord Shelburne, 25 November 1767; 113)

How to provide stable government to a French colony presented British officials with some formidable challenges, and it was not until a decade and a half after winning the territory that they came up with what they believed was a workable plan — the Quebec Act of 1774. The Quebec Act has been widely acknowledged as the first official recognition of the Canadian bicultural fact, confirming the rights of French Canadians to maintain their language, religion, and civil laws. These rights, however, were in no way coequal to the rights enjoyed by English Canadians. French Canadians could not even take part in the political process or hold public office. For this reason, it was decided not to follow the typical colonial precedent of granting an elected assembly to Quebec. Any such assembly would have been entirely unrepresentative of the colony, dominated instead by New England merchants. British authorities showed elsewhere (in Nova Scotia, for instance) that they were not receptive to the idea of non-representative assemblies. This decision, however, infuriated established English colonists who saw this as yet another sign of Britain's plan to remove their own established liberties. Just how little they cared for the liberty of their French neighbours and, by extension, how popular multicultural ideals were in English colonial society at the time may be gauged by the response of the Continental Congress to the act:

> Nor can we suppress our astonishment, that a British Parliament should ever consent to establish in that country a religion that has deluged your island in blood, and dispersed impiety, bigotry, persecution, murder and rebellion through every part of the world. (*Journals of the Continental Congress*, 121)

No resolution was achieved. Only a few weeks prior to the official proclamation of the Quebec Act the first shots were fired in the American War of Independence, and the New England colonies were politically separated from the new Canadian territories.

The growing separation of church and state did lead to the relaxation of most civil disabilities against Catholics throughout the British Empire by 1830, but this seemed to be rooted in the increasing secularization of western society generally rather than in an emerging philosophy of British pluralism particularly. As in Nova Scotia, earlier, far from believing that French Canadians had inalienable linguistic or cultural rights, the tiny English minority in Canada looked forward to the first opportunity when their numbers would be sufficiently large to eradicate French from the country. It was argued that the combined British population in Upper and Lower Canada had grown large enough to achieve this end by 1822 if a strategy to unify and thus "anglify" the Canadas by reducing French Canadians to a political minority could be implemented. No workable solution was found until after the 1837–38 rebellion when Lord Durham was dispatched to investigate problems in the governance of Canada and recommend solutions. He concluded that assimilating the French should still be the chief priority of the Canadian political process:

> I repeat that the alteration of the character of the province ought to be immediately entered on, and firmly, though cautiously, followed up; that in any plan which may be adopted for the future management of Lower Canada, the first object ought to be that of making it an English province; and that with this end in view, the ascendancy should never again be placed in any hands but those of an English population (*Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of British North America*, 3 vols., Sir Charles Edward Lucas, ed., II: 296)

Durham's impact on the evolution of British colonial policy in Canada has been badly overestimated, but his general belief that Canada should be singularly and resolutely English and that any political power should reside only with Canada's English population was widely shared by British authorities. That a substantial part of the logic of the union of the Canadas in 1841 was to disenfranchise (and eventually anglicize) French Canadians was clearly understood. Nova Scotia's famous political leader and reformer Joseph Howe expressed his disgust with such an abuse of the political process and indicated that Nova Scotia would have nothing to do with it.

Joseph Howe's indignation was rooted in respect for the principles of democracy rather than pluralism. Attitudes towards French (and other cultures) in English and English colonial society were decidedly negative, even in Howe's Nova Scotia. Voices of overt hostility were, of course, matched by voices of tolerance and even admiration, but there was certainly no ground swell of pro-multicultural thought in 19th-century Britain or Canada. Quite the opposite from seeing French culture as an asset to Canada, the English elite routinely denigrated it. Because the culture of France had not yet lost its preeminence in Europe, this was usually done by characterizing French Canadian culture as a backward and degenerate version of the mother culture. Even Lord Durham, who otherwise had some very positive things to say about the French Canadian character in his report, used this model to portray French Canadian culture as a debilitating evil:

> There can hardly be conceived a nationality more destitute of all that can invigorate and elevate a people than that which is exhibited by the descendants of the French in Lower Canada, owing to their retaining their peculiar language and manners. They are a people with no history, and no literature ….
>
> The institutions of France, during the period of the colonization of Canada, were, perhaps more than those of any other European nation, calculated to repress the intelligence and freedom of the great mass of the people (II: 27)
>
> … [French Canadians] remain the same uninstructed, inactive, unprogressive people ... They cling to ancient prejudices, ancient customs and ancient laws, not from any strong sense of their beneficial effects, but with the unreasoning tenacity of an uneducated and unprogressive people. (II: 28)
>
> They remain an old and stationary society in a new and progressive world. In all essentials, they are still French; but French in every respect dissimilar to those of France in the present day. (II: 31)

Despite their appearance, such criticisms had very little to do with French Canadian culture and would appear again and again, around the world, unchanged in their essentials, applied to virtually any ethnic group over which English society was able to exert political jurisdiction. This paternalistic sense of superiority and the paradoxical concept of liberating people by repressing them was taken even further with Celtic peoples than with French Canadians.

> … the Celt does not understand what we Saxons mean by independence ... As a Saxon, I abhor all dynasties, monarchies and bayonet governments, but this latter seems to be the only one suitable for Celtic man. (John Knox in Colin Kidd, "Teutonist Ethnology and Scottish Nationalist Inhibition, 1780–1880," *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. LXXIV; April, 1995: 53, 61)

Fortunately, whatever the weaknesses of the Canadian union, it was not a bayonet government, and French Canadians were able to use their large numbers to effect positive democratic change. In 1849 French was admitted as an official language in the Canadian legislature. However, any rights French Canadians managed to win could still raise deep-seated prejudices, including frequent howls of protest that "English" Canada was on the verge of enslavement by French Canadian "priest craft." John A. MacDonald, responding to a journalist who was bitterly complaining of such French Canadian domination in 1856, revealed just how difficult it was for French culture in Canada to earn anything like representation proportional to its large population:

> But the truth is you British L. [Lower] Canadians never can forget that you were once supreme — that Jean Baptiste was your hewer of wood and drawer of water

> – You struggle like the Protestant Irish in Ireland) — like the Norman Invaders in England not for equality, but ascendancy — the difference between you and those interesting and amiable people being that you have not the honesty to admit it — You can't & won't admit the principle that the majority [in Lower Canada] must govern ... (John A. MacDonald to Brown Chamberlin, Editor, Montreal *Gazette*, 21 January 1856: 227)

John A. MacDonald was raised (predominantly in Canada) by parents from Rogart, a parish in the Scottish Highlands (with significant ties to Nova Scotia), and was reputed to have had Gaelic as his first language. Whether this led him to be particularly sensitive to cultural issues and the plight of French Canadians is impossible to say. MacDonald was an intelligent politician who dreamed of building (and leading) a new country, and he would succeed in both goals, becoming the new country's first Prime Minister in 1867; maintaining a cordial relationship with French Canadians, the country's largest ethnic group, was, if nothing else, a sensible political policy.

The ability of the French in Quebec to exact this sort of respect was critical to the growth of French culture in Canada as a whole. It allowed for the continued development of a French Canadian political and professional class, which in turn enhanced the ability of French Canadians to make institutions more responsive to their needs, particularly in Quebec. One of the important outcomes of this was the reaffirmation of French Canadian status in Confederation in 1867. The British North America Act of that year had one clause relating to language. That was section 133, which stated:

> Either the English or the French Language may be used by any Person in the Debates of the Houses of the Parliament of Canada and of the Houses of the legislature of Quebec; and both those Languages shall be used in the respective Records and Journals of those Houses; and either of those Languages may be used by any Person or in any Pleading or Process in or issuing from any Court of Canada established under this Act, and in or from all or any of the Courts of Quebec. The Acts of the Parliament of Canada and of the Legislature of Quebec shall be printed and published in both those languages. (BNA, 1867, 30–31 Vict., c. XLIII)

While this status should not be underestimated, it should not be mistaken for actual support for French Canadian culture or for the French language. Not only was there considerable ongoing political pressure to remove French as an official Canadian language (stoutly resisted by John A. MacDonald), there was no support for actually delivering French services in Canada. This was especially true outside Quebec, where French was, as far as it was possible to do, ignored in the political life of the country. As one scholar noted, section 133 of the British North America Act:

> … does not impose any obligation on public authorities to provide additional services in the two languages. This was necessarily so, for the obligations arising from the section itself had passed more or less unnoticed outside Quebec;

> institutions remained unilingual and the regulations which would have rendered section 133 effective were not made. (Bastarache and Ouellet 1995, 393)

In fact, as French Canadian scholars explained, it would not be until after the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, when French Canadian resentment finally erupted in Quebec, that bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada would really begin to gather force. The Official Languages Act of 1969 and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 would finally take an active approach to guaranteeing French language rights in Canada (not just in Quebec and in parliament) and would begin to make demands that a whole host of services actually be made available to French Canadians in their mother tongue. That such rights were not won until more than a century after the British North America Act was proclaimed gives some sense of just how far 19th-century Canada was from being a truly bilingual and bicultural society even after a century of political status for the French language and active involvement of French Canadian statesmen in the development of the country.

For other cultural groups in 18th and 19th-century Canada, such as the Gaels and even French Canadians outside Quebec, the struggle would be all the more difficult. For all practical purposes, their languages and cultures had no recognized status and thus no recognized rights. However large their communities might be, it was deemed in the public interest to deny their cultural and linguistic realities and to insist on conformity to English linguistic and cultural structures. In the late 19th century John A. MacDonald did express his interest in seeing the language rights enjoyed by the French in Quebec extended to the much-coveted Canadian North West, which was just beginning to experience substantial settlement. Recognizing the prominence of Germans among the recent arrivals to the Prairies, he also suggested that, in some circumstances, similar rights for the German language might be desirable in the new territories, as well. On the matter of older linguistic cultural groups such as the Acadians and the Gaels, however, MacDonald appears to have been silent.

In spite of MacDonald's personal reticence, the status of Gaelic in Canada was raised in the Senate during this important period of nation building and cultural and linguistic debate. In 1890, in recognition of Gaelic's long and distinguished history in Canada, Senator Thomas Robert MacInnes, a long-serving parliamentarian representing British Columbia (although originally from Lake Ainslie, Cape Breton), introduced a bill to make Gaelic Canada's third official language. MacInnes noted that, according to the last available census (1881), the combined Scottish and Irish population of Canada numbered 1,657,266 compared to 1,298,929 French and only 881,301 English. While not claiming all or even a majority of the Scots and Irish as Gaelic speakers, he pointed out that the number who did still speak the ancestral language of the two national groups was sufficiently large to justify such official status. The country's first two Prime Ministers were noted as Gaelic speakers (including the serving Prime Minister, John A. MacDonald) as were 18 active Senators and 32 sitting Members of Parliament. Part of MacInnes address was delivered in Gaelic. (Robert O'Driscoll & Lorna Reynolds, eds. *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada*, Vol. II; Toronto: Celtic Arts, 1988: 719–721)

Senator MacInnes was a capable and respected man — a Harvard scholar, a medical doctor, and a senator of nine years-standing and soon to be appointed Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia — and his bill was intended merely to acknowledge the important contribution Gaels had made to the founding of Canada through a symbolic recognition of their language. In spite of this, MacInnes' bill was treated as a time-wasting prank. The comments of several Senators were explicit:

> I am sure we would not like to indulge in Gaelic as an official language. I do not know how to treat this matter — as a joke, or how. I cannot say anything seriously about it, for it is evidently a joke. (Hon. Mr. Kaulbach)
>
> ... this Bill appears to me like a sort of far-fetched joke ... (Hon. Mr. Abbott)

Senator Kaulbach of Nova Scotia, who claimed to be a Gaelic learner himself, took particular exception to the bill. Resorting to familiar prejudices and stereotypes, he claimed that Gaelic was well suited to poetry and fairy tales but otherwise useless:

> I ask my hon. friend if he were entering into a debate in philosophy, science or art, where would he be with his Gaelic? I don't think the hon. gentleman himself, if he undertook to discuss a problem in Euclid or mathematics, would find the Gaelic language of any service to him. I am afraid that in any department of business in this country his language would be entirely useless — even in the part of the country from where these people come Gaelic is not used as an official language, and is it reasonable that privileges should be asked for Highland Scotchmen in this House that are not asked for in their own country? (Hon. Mr. Kaulbach)

This was a line of reasoning frequently met with in Gaelic language debates, despite the inherent irony of questioning another language's ability to handle concepts that had themselves been introduced into English variously through Greek, Latin, French, the Hindu-Arabic tradition, and other sources. Staunch advocates for the singular use of English seemed to miss the deeper point when claiming that English had been enriched by powerful new ideas and concepts from diverse languages and cultures — that being that diverse languages and cultures were the repositories of important ideas. Instead, the underlying philosophy of the "one language theory" was narrowly utilitarian and tinged with social Darwinism. It went far beyond advocating the use of one official language for the convenient and efficient administration of political jurisdictions, its major premise being that "progress," like natural selection, was rooting out the weaker languages and cultures, such as Gaelic, which was suited to poetry and fairy tales but not business or any other sort of modern endeavour. Eventually, only the fittest language (English) would survive. Anything done to artificially delay that natural process would prevent progress itself and could, therefore, only cause harm. There was rarely any inherent good seen in any of these language or cultures.

Senator Kaulbach argued, for instance, that the people of Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia, did not really begin to get on in the world until they eliminated German in their schools some two decades earlier. Prior to that period, residents of the county were "laughed at" when they attempted to do business outside their own district. The disappearance of their language and culture was no loss, whatsoever, as far as he was concerned, since now they could conduct their business without being ridiculed by English speakers. That seemed to be all that mattered. His fierce opposition to the Gaelic bill came from his belief that it would slow this English cultural manifest destiny and, thus, progress itself.

> In Nova Scotia, which is largely settled by Scotchmen, and in Cape Breton, the language was never made official, and even in England and Scotland they do not want it. I certainly deprecate anything that would have a tendency to extend plurality of languages. I believe even the French in parliament speak more in English than they do in their own language. They can speak fluently and well, and with force, and I hope the day is not far distant when the English language will be the language of the continent. (Hon. Mr. Kaulbach)

Ironically enough, it was another Nova Scotian Senator, R. B. Dickey, who proposed torpedoing the Gaelic bill on a point of law. He claimed that official language use was legislated under section 133 of the British North America Act and that the Senate did not have the power to amend the act to include Gaelic or any other language. Senator Power informed the house that this was incorrect and that the British North America Act in no way restricted Canada from designating as many official languages as it pleased. But he went on to suggest that if the Gaelic bill were as lacking in merit as those who objected to it argued, they should follow the lead of the Prime Minister who always gave even the faultiest of legislation the courtesy of a second reading where it would be given a quick but dignified defeat. Despite Senator Power's recommendation for dignified treatment, the Gaelic bill would receive no such courtesy. Senator Abbott indicated that such treatment should be reserved only when the house agreed with the principle of the bill and that the Gaelic bill deserved no such consideration.

> I would be sorry to see this Bill go off on a point of order, or in any other way than by a direct vote against it showing that this House has not hesitated for a single moment in expressing its disapprobation of the principle of the measure. (Hon. Mr. Abbot)

The Gaelic bill was defeated 42–7.

Without meaning to do so, opposition to the Gaelic bill in the Senate demonstrated just how critical the issue of language status was. As Senator Kaulbach's arguments revealed, Gaelic was deemed unworthy of status and its associated rights and privileges to a very large extent because it did not already have status and its associated rights and privileges. It was, for all intents and purposes an illegitimate language in British and, hence, Canadian society. For French Canadians, maintaining language status helped maintain the legitimacy of their language and culture, in spite of the fact that in some respects the rights they were accorded may have seemed more latent than real. But in a more important respect, status allowed French Canadians to continue to perceive their language as a normal part of the society they inhabited rather than as some folkloristic oddity, clinging to survival in rural backwaters. It also allowed them to maintain an educated leadership who routinely used French in their professional life.

For Gaels, by contrast, there would be no such sense of normalcy and little or no opportunity for the institutional and professional expression and continued growth of their language. The famous Napier Report of 1883, for instance, severely criticized legal officials in the Scottish Highlands for being unable to understand the language of the population that they ostensibly served, but it merely suggested that competence in Gaelic for these sheriff-substitutes would be, henceforward, a "desirable" qualification. In Nova Scotia during the same era, use of Gaelic in the legal system in Gaelic communities revealed a general atmosphere of politely amused institutional dismissiveness. The following example occurred in the provincial judicial system sometime during the term (1881–1904) of Chief Justice James MacDonald of Bridgeville, Pictou County.

> This trial took place at Baddeck in the Island of Cape Breton. The jurors all spoke Gaelic — their mother tongue. The parties to the suit and witnesses all Gaelic; the lawyers on both sides spoke Gaelic; and last and most important of all, the chief justice spoke Gaelic, his mother tongue — in a word the whole court, probably including the audience were the descendants of Highland settlers and therefore familiar with the language from childhood. Instead of swearing in an interpreter [*sic*] the usual way to translate into English the evidence of such witnesses as could only speak Gaelic, by common consent it was agreed to conduct the whole proceedings in the Gaelic language. The witnesses were examined, and cross-examined the lawyers addressed the jury and the chief gave his charge all in Gaelic. Was there ever such a trial before or since in Nova Scotia or Canada? The lawyers engaged were, on one side, our late Governor Duncan Fraser, and on the other side, the late Samuel McDonald of Port Hood."(*Nova Scotia Historical Society*, 1920, Vol. 20:139–153)

The trial demonstrated that in spite of a long history of institutional exclusion Gaelic had maintained the strength and the flexibility to regain its former domains of use and that the Gaelic community was quite capable of producing the people necessary to make this happen. In so doing, it also contradicted popular belief in English-speaking society regarding Gaelic's inherent unsuitability for such intellectual endeavours (Gaelic legal texts were, after all, among the oldest in Europe and much older than their counterparts in the English language). What the trial best demonstrated, however, was that accessing such normal domains of use in the community was such an abnormal event that it drew the amused commentary of English-speaking observers. The fact that the trial was held in Gaelic in a county that was over 70 per cent Gaelic speaking and in a province where Gaelic was the second most common language should hardly have been worthy of note, but the commentator was probably right to imply that this was so unusual as to have been unprecedented and that readers of the Nova Scotia Historical Society journal would consider it a rather droll historical oddity.

Scottish Gaels (like other ethnic groups) were expected by British authorities to assimilate quickly and easily into English society, whether in Britain itself or in the vast territories of the British Empire. The major problem with that goal was that there was often a distinct lack of an English population to make it happen. In the Scottish Highlands, Gaelic was the native language of a large population among whom there had been no large-scale plantation of English speakers to deliberately destabilize the native language as had been carried out in Ireland. Incomers who spoke English and no Gaelic may have been disproportionately represented in the upper levels of society in the Highlands and disproportionately influential, but their numbers were not large. The Gaelic population, therefore, had very little opportunity for intense exposure to English-language use on a day-to-day basis.

In Nova Scotia (and some other regions of Canada), the situation was similar. Scottish Gaelic settlement was early, usually homogenous, and often extensive; in the case of Nova Scotia, Scottish Gaelic settlement dominated the eastern third of the province. Settlers who spoke only English and no Gaelic in this region were themselves a somewhat diverse and not always unified mix of English, Americans, Lowland Scots, and Anglo-Irish, who may again have been disproportionately represented in positions of influence and authority, but who were otherwise a very small minority in this largely Gaelic-speaking region. There was, therefore, no large, long-established English-speaking community in the immediate vicinity to provide the frequent example and regular interaction necessary for assimilation into English society. Scottish scholar John MacInnes explained in the bluntest possible terms what the chief mechanism for change would be and what it would accomplish, "the processes of ethnocide work of course at many levels and in many guises, but they are most conspicuous in the domain of formal education." (*The Celtic Consciousness*: 269)

The Thin Edge of the Wedge: Education in 19th-Century Nova Scotia

Gaelic and the Public Schools: The Scottish Background

Gaels coming to Nova Scotia were leaving behind a society that had become increasingly retrenched over the preceding centuries, and this was as evident in education as in any other sphere. There really was no well-organized public school system in the Highlands at the time the first emigrants were leaving for the New World. Conflict with the expansionist English society of the British Isles had severely truncated formal Gaelic administrative structures in the century and a half leading up to emigration, as had the Reformation. John Lorne Campbell indicated, for example, that in the century and a half following the Reformation in Scotland (1560) the formerly hundreds of Catholic parishes in the Highlands were repressed rather than reformed — left without even a resident cleric, let alone the underpinning of healthy, ecclesiastical infrastructure. (Campbell 1945, 43) The undermining of these structures, particularly the Gaelic political structures, dramatically reduced the major source of patronage for Gaelic professionals as well as the opportunities available to them to exercise their vocation. It had a similar effect on the need for and relevance of Gaelic professional education. As the rest of

Europe began moving from a mediaeval to modern education system, education in the Highlands stalled and, in some ways, regressed.

By the emigration era, almost none of the traditional Gaelic professions were still supported in any formal way: the last centres for training in the Gaelic arts were closing their doors; patronage for Gaelic literature and for the other arts, such as music, had all but ceased; and classical Gaelic, the common literary language of Ireland and Scotland, had fallen into disuse with some professional families who had been literate for 500 years and who had maintained manuscript libraries in as many as five or six different languages, no longer able to read a word in any language. From here on, literacy in Gaelic would not only be rare, it would be arrived at outside a formal educational system and would be solely in the vernacular.

Some of the leading families of the Highlands continued to find a way to provide a good education for their children (seemingly outside a formal institutional framework) before sending them to Britain or Europe for university training, but even here the amount of Gaelic educational content appears to have been in heavy decline. There is certainly nothing to suggest the strongly Gaelic orientation of the medieval bardic school system or the fluent command of Gaelic literature and art that had previously existed. The great Gaelic artistic and literary traditions were being compressed into the existing Gaelic folk tradition to become part of the community's informal educational system, while the concepts of Gaelic culture and formal education became increasingly foreign to one another.

The new educational system being prepared outside the Highlands to fill this vacuum was slow coming, and its intent was not to rejuvenate Gaelic education but to eliminate it altogether and to establish new cultural patterns. The major goal of the English-oriented public school education would be the assimilation — or, as it was usually described, the "civilization" — of the Gaels. They were to be taught loyalty to the reigning monarch, the Protestant faith, and the English language, not necessarily in that order. An early attempt to realize these goals was made in 1609, following the collapse of Ireland and the death blow that dealt to the Gaelic educational system that had once intertwined Scotland and Ireland culturally and intellectually. The Statutes of Iona of that year demanded that any man in the Highlands who owned more than 60 cattle send his heirs to the Lowlands of Scotland or to England for an education in the English language and Protestant religion upon pain of forfeiture of his goods and lands. The government's intent was clear, but its means, not especially compelling. Some complied with the stricture, but its overall impact on Gaels was not strong. It would not be until the establishment of the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of the Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) in 1709 that a reliable, pervasive, and long-term English educational presence could be established in the Highlands.

From 1709, a system of education began to spread through the Highlands in which Gaelic was absolutely forbidden. The purpose of the SSPCK schools was to civilize Gaels through evangelism and anglicization. Students in SSPCK schools were to be taught literacy through Bible reading, but the use of Gaelic, even for translation or explanation, was utterly forbidden. Any Gaelic use in the schools was to be punished. Ideally, it was hoped that opportunities could also be met for removing students from the Highlands to the Lowlands were they could be fully immersed in a non-Gaelic environment and more quickly made into useful citizens.

It was not until 1767 and the publication of a Gaelic New Testament that the ban on the use of Gaelic in SSPCK schools was lifted, but it would be at least another two generations before any real change would result. The emphasis during this interim period remained on teaching students to read the English language, and the use of Gaelic was to be restricted to an absolute minimum. Most SSPCK teachers simply continued the philosophy of using only the English language in their classrooms. The effectiveness of this means of education in imparting any actual knowledge to monolingual Gaelic children need hardly be commented upon. But bad as it was, it remained the closest thing to a public school education that most Gaels would receive in the century leading up to the settlement of Nova Scotia.

In the early 19th century, reforms were introduced in Scotland, but progress remained sluggish. The printing of the full Bible in Scottish Gaelic in 1801 seemed to inspire officials in the south of Scotland to rethink the English-only orientation of Gaelic education. The goal remained anglicization, but it was becoming increasingly clear that such an aim could be effectively achieved only by using the Gaelic language as a means of instruction, and new organizations and strategies began to emerge. The Edinburgh Gaelic Schools Society became the prime mover in this new approach to education, and according to one authority, the threat they posed to the SSPCK's established sources of funding also shook the latter group out of its complacency. (Victor Edward Durkacz, *The Decline of the Celtic Languages*, Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd, 114) In 1812, the SSPCK was moved to experiment with the idea of teaching students to read in their native language before teaching them to read in English. An inspection of the society's schools in 1824, however, revealed that little had changed. Few were taught to read Gaelic at all and those only after they had been taught to read English:

> Patrick Butter, an inspector of schools for the Society, complained in 1824 than [sic] in many cases schoolmasters could not speak Gaelic despite the fact that their pupils understood nothing else. 'The plain consequence,' he wrote, 'is that in the great majority of instances the education of the poor highlander comes in the result actually to nothing.' (Clyde 1995, 79)

The SSPCK schools might have been providing an education that amounted "actually to nothing" in the traditional sense, but in other ways their impact was profound. More than a century of such interaction with Gaels had helped undermine the people's confidence in their language, culture and community. Gaels began to firmly disassociate the concepts of formal education and Gaelic culture by the 19th century and to accept anglocentric prejudices regarding their culture. In spite of the fact that the Gaelic literary tradition was hundreds of years older than its English counterpart, an Edinburgh Gaelic Schools Society report in 1814 revealed that everyone involved in Gaelic education, including Gaels themselves, had come to believe "... that it was a most difficult thing to learn

Gaelic reading without first learning to read English." (Durkacz 1983, 59) Similarly, even though authorities outside the Highlands were coming to the conclusion that English-only education was a very ineffective means of assimilating, let alone, educating Gaels, Patrick Butter discovered during his 1824 SSPCK inspection that Gaelic parents had a preference not only for the teaching of the English language but also for its use as the medium of instruction. Perhaps most ominously (and tellingly), he discovered that parents also considered the role of education to be that of "enabling the scholar to migrate from his native country." (Clyde 1995, 79–80)

Gaelic and the Public Schools: Nova Scotia

Educationally speaking, Gaels coming to Nova Scotia shared important similarities with Acadians already resident and returning to the province. Both groups were faced with the challenge of reanimating education in their communities in a colony that did not yet have an effective province-wide educational system. Both groups tended to be poor and did not have large surpluses of money to devote to the needs of education. Both groups spoke non-status languages in Nova Scotia and had poor access to books and teaching materials in their native tongues. Literacy rates were also unusually low in both groups. A survey by the Inverness Society for the Education of the Poor in the Highlands in 1826, for example, (the same year the SSPCK made it a policy to teach students to read in Gaelic before English) reported that about 50 per cent of Highlanders were illiterate.

In Nova Scotia, this number would likely have been substantially higher. The survey revealed that the most doggedly Gaelic regions of the Highlands (the western Highlands and islands), the area from which Nova Scotia would draw the bulk of her Highland settlers, had illiteracy rates of closer to 70 per cent. This corresponds with an observation recorded in *Patterson's History of Victoria County*. A local religious official noted that more than 80 per cent of the heads of families in Middle River, Cape Breton, (predominantly from Skye) were not literate.

> Mr. Farquharson estimated that not one fifth of the heads of families could read. "Most of those," he adds, "who were advanced in life before the Gaelic Schools were established cannot read, but the greater part of those who came out under thirty years of age can." (MacDonald, W.J. 1978, 85)

It is true that early migration from the Highlands was tending to cream off a disproportionately large number of the traditional educated, literate elite, particularly in the 18th century and the first decade of the 19th century, and this would have tended to contribute to higher rates of literacy in the province. However, settlers educated to that standard would have been a small minority of the general population, and most of the general population had left Scotland before popular-oriented literacy training had gotten under way. This in all likelihood more than offset the seemingly greater representation of the former educated ranks in Gaelic society in Nova Scotia. Rates of literacy also appear to have been lower among Catholics due to the stronger culture of home Bible study in Protestant areas, which would almost certainly have contributed to lower literacy rates in Nova Scotia as well, since the proportion of Catholics in the Highland Scottish population of the province was about 50 per cent as compared to well under ten per cent in Scotland.

On the plus side, compared to Acadians, Gaels still maintained a significant, well-educated, and literate elite. This included a much better representation of native clergy than was evident in early Acadian communities in post-Expulsion Nova Scotia. On the negative side, this Gaelic elite was no longer formally educated in Gaelic, and the concept of Gaelic and education were becoming divorced from one another, generally, in Gaelic society.

As a pioneer community, Gaels were largely left to their own devices when it came to providing education within their developing communities. What evidence we have (and it is, unfortunately, scanty) suggests what may have been a continuation of educational practice in the Scottish Highlands — a combination of fairly informal secular, classical instruction provided by tutors and religious instruction provided by clerics, probably with a certain degree of overlap. Classical education seems to have been substantially supplied by the leading families of the former tacksman class, who, through a combination of home schooling and professional tutoring, educated their children (and, it seems, some other children in their districts as well) before sending them abroad for more advanced education. Promising young men were also prepared for the religious professions, but not a great deal can be said about the educational strategies employed, particularly in Catholic districts where such educational practices were ostensibly illegal. The language of instruction in these early classical schools appears to have been Gaelic, although this is not certain. Other languages such as Greek, Latin, French, and English were undoubtedly used, particularly as scholars reached more advanced levels.

The earliest such school to come to light in Canada was in the Glenaladale settlement in Prince Edward Island (established in 1772), and it seems broadly typical. That settlement included pioneers who had been well educated in various European universities, and from among these, tutors were engaged by the Glenaladale MacDonalds to operate what has been remembered as a "school" — often claimed as the first in Prince Edward Island. The syllabus appears to have had a strongly classical orientation, and it has been recorded that Gaelic was the language of instruction. Graduates (who could afford it) went on to more advanced education in Quebec, Britain, and Europe. It is evident, however, that among the languages being learned by this Gaelic elite, English was particularly important.

How widespread these early schools were and how open to all ranks of society is impossible to determine as we get only the scantiest glimpses of them. Sandy "Rhetland" MacDonald, the heir to the Rhetland estates in Moidart, is known to have kept the school in the Glenaladale settlement in Prince Edward Island before settling in Judique, Cape Breton, where one would expect him to have continued his vocation if only informally. Alexander MacGillivray, son of John, the piper to the Glenaladale MacDonalds, kept a similar school in Antigonish County and wrote and published the first Gaelic book in Nova Scotia, *Companach an Oganaich, no An Comhairliche Taitneach* (The Youth's Companion or the Friendly Counsellor) in 1836. Rev. Uisdean MacDonald, brother to John MacDonald of Glenaladale, who settled first in Arisaig, Nova Scotia, before moving to Prince Edward Island, was fondly remembered for rewarding his students after demonstrating that they had soundly learned their catechism by playing traditional music on the violin for them to dance to — a combination of formal religious and informal cultural schooling.

The educational level of these prominent families and their role in the provision of local education was clearly considerable, but there were also many independent instructors (of varying ability) in the early Gaelic community. Itinerant and settled classical scholars appear here and there, such as Malcolm MacLellan, who first began teaching in Mabou Coal Mines (where a cairn stands in his memory) after arriving from Morar and who later became the principal instructor at East Bay College, a minor seminary on the other side of the island in the 1820s. Education often had a strong religious purpose, and it is not surprising to find influential clerics, apparently unconnected to the tacksmen families, also playing an important role in early educational efforts. One Presbyterian minister in Pictou, for example, requested that the Edinburgh Religious Tracts Society send out 5,000 Gaelic tracts to Gaels in Nova Scotia in 1810 and presumably had some scheme in mind for teaching Nova Scotian Gaels to read them, as literacy levels were still fairly low (Durkacz 1983, 105). Probably the most famous clerical instructor was Rev. Norman MacLeod, who emigrated from Sutherland to Pictou, Nova Scotia, to St. Ann's, Cape Breton, to Australia and, finally, to Waipu, New Zealand, bringing a considerable flock with him. MacLeod is known to have kept a Gaelic school at St. Ann's and, in all, likelihood, did so in his other homes as well (G. G. Patterson: 100). The bits of evidence we have suggest a greater reliance on such clerical instruction in Protestant communities and particularly on Gaelic Bible literacy rather than on the traditional learned families as was the case in Catholic communities, but this may well be a weakness in the sparse documentary sources rather than a reflection of actual practice.

Lori Vitale Cox gives a brief synopsis of this early attempt to educate children in Nova Scotia's Gaelic communities (particularly in Protestant districts) and also a hint of the problems Gaels faced trying to find qualified teachers sympathetic to their linguistic needs as education became more systematic and externally influenced.

> Before state-run English schools had become firmly established in Cape Breton, small Gaelic schools were organized informally in the homes of the most literate members of the community. These schools were for the most part religious in nature, having been established to teach children how to read the Bible in Gaelic. In more populated areas the members of the Edinburgh Ladies' Association, a Scottish Presbyterian group, organized church schools. These schools seem to have had a much more tolerant attitude towards the Gaelic language than that espoused by the Council of Public Instruction (precursor of the present Department of Education). Church services were held in Gaelic and Bible classes were taught in the language. According to a July 1863 issue of *The Presbyterian Witness*, however, there was a shortage of bilingual teachers and ministers in Cape Breton. Often the teachers in these early church schools, as in the state schools, were unfamiliar with the language and culture of their pupils and their attitudes seem to have been somewhat condescending. In the 1840s, a Mrs. Munro

> and her husband taught in Boularderie in one of the church schools supported by the Edinburgh Ladies' Association. Instead of trying to understand Gaelic herself, she complained of her student's ignorance. The children's "Bible lessons," she said, "cost me much pains and time, from the difficulty of making them understand, they knowing so little English." (Cox 1994, 22–23)

Unfortunately, we have far more questions than answers regarding education in the pioneer community of Gaelic Nova Scotia. We do not know how many schools there were and have only scanty information on where and when some of them were established. We do not know what proportion of the children in a community would attend school, how much schooling they might receive in a year, and how many years they might typically attend. We know that some schools used Gaelic as a medium of instruction, but whether these were the majority or minority of schools cannot even be reliably guessed at. We can hypothesize that most of these schools used Gaelic as the medium of instruction as most of the people involved spoke Gaelic as their mother tongue and in the case of almost all of the students as their only language. However, known educational practice in Scotland does not guarantee this to have been so. We know some of the teachers but little about the general standards of teaching and the curriculum. We know when new central education initiatives were launched but do not really have a clear picture of when these began replacing local community efforts in any effective way. When a more systematic approach to education developed in Nova Scotia through public schools, official records indicated that educational levels in Gaelic Nova Scotia were low. However, we do not know if this reflected the accessibility and quality of earlier educational efforts or the results of a newer educational system that was not operating in the language of the community. We can only speculate that the many challenges the Gaelic community faced in the early years, including bare survival, would have made a good educational system a rather low priority in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and that educational levels tended, therefore, also to be fairly low, with notable exceptions.

It would also seem that while Gaelic cultural content may have been used illustratively in these early schools, the emphasis of instruction was external to the culture. The traditional store of Gaelic material seems to have been left to tradition bearers — poets, singers, storytellers, historians, musicians, dancers, and the like — rather than to teachers and to the highly developed but informal folk tradition rather than to the school. Initially, this was probably the direct result of the loss of the formerly formal methods of Gaelic cultural instruction rather than an intentional design to bar Gaelic content in classrooms. Certainly, many of the Gaelic tradition bearers at the time were recognized as very learned and were still highly respected and a fair (but declining) number of them could be counted among the formally educated Gaelic elite. However, it is also the case that attitudes towards Gaelic and education were changing in Gaelic society as the reports noted above of the Edinburgh Gaelic Schools Society and SSPCK in 1814 and 1824 suggest.

One thing is abundantly clear: whatever the state of Gaelic education, it did not prepare the large Gaelic community of Nova Scotia intellectually to bend the emerging Nova

Scotian educational system to its cultural and linguistic reality. Provincially organized education in 18th-century Nova Scotia was meagre in its reach and strictly linked to the English ascendancy, primarily in Halifax and the Annapolis Valley. By the 19th century, attempts were made to broaden the reach of the school system and begin regulating education throughout the province. Provision was made for the establishment of grammar schools (and free education) in which subjects such as English grammar, Latin, Greek, orthography, geography, and mathematics would be taught. This met with varying degrees of success. By 1826, Acadians had managed to secure an annual grant for Acadian schools, but the much larger Gaelic community seemed to go unnoticed. This reflected a similar trajectory in Britain. Welsh educationalists had amassed a critical body of material supporting the benefits of bilingual education by the mid-19th century, but although educational inspectors in Gaelic school districts in Scotland and in Canada observed similar benefits from bilingual education upon educational levels in Gaelic communities during the same period, no systematic critique was constructed and no action was taken to introduce formal Gaelic medium instruction.

As communities began to get slightly better established in Gaelic Nova Scotia, the struggle to provide education became increasingly a struggle to adapt to the slowly emerging provincial education system. Quoting from Mr. Fraser's 1837 inspection of an unnamed school in Cape Breton (possibly in western Inverness County) after a recent famine had swept across the island, G. G. Patterson gave another interesting insight into the educational challenges facing Gaels in Nova Scotia in the 1830s.

> On the 21st and 22nd of November, was engaged in examining the schools, in which exercise the parents took much interest. I found matters with respect to both teachers and taught very backwards; but when we take into consideration the many disadvantages of a new and thinly peopled country, together with the poverty of the country, we perceive a gradual improvement here. They are stretching every nerve to educate their children. School books are what we want most – English and Gaelic school books. There are married men who would gladly attend school to learn to read in their own language, Gaelic, were teachers and books within their reach. (G. G. Patterson: 86)

By the 1840s, Nova Scotia was moving towards a more standardized system of education for the whole province. The 1841 Education Act was the most comprehensive educational statute passed in Nova Scotia, and it provided for a uniform English language education system throughout the province. It was also the first apparent attempt by the government of Nova Scotia to address the problem of delivering education to all of Nova Scotia's diverse language groups. It is often cited as a significant early recognition of the status of Gaelic in Nova Scotia and of Nova Scotia's relatively liberal institutional attitudes towards minority languages. The clause mentioning Gaelic stated:

> *And be it enacted*, That any School wherein the ordinary Instruction may be in the French, Gaelic, or German Language, in any school District in this Province, shall be entitled to the like portion of the public money as any school wherein the

> ordinary instruction may be in the English language. (*Statutes of Nova Scotia* 1841, Chap. 43; Section 14)

Despite its pro-multicultural appearance, the clause was not designed to actually encourage the teaching of languages other than English but merely to address the practical problem of providing education in a province where English was, in fact, not widely spoken. The clause was also essentially toothless.

In spite of the ambiguousness of any claim the English language might have had to exclusive majority status in Nova Scotia (not to mention Canada) in the 19th century, it was indisputably the language of the most powerful sector of the population — a sector backed up by an institutional infrastructure that increasingly consolidated its position of authority. Although the language clause drawn up for the 1841 statutes was modest in its aims, proposing simply that teachers in the extensive non-English-speaking areas of the province be allowed to use their native languages for instruction, it was rejected by the governing elite of Nova Scotia, the Legislative Council. Only when threatened with the prospect of a complete meltdown of relations with the Legislative Assembly did the Council relent and allow the act to pass on its second appearance and only after the all-important compulsory subscription clause had been removed. This effectively emasculated the language clause.

Even without that blow, the clause was sufficiently weak as to be next to meaningless. It most certainly did not give Gaelic (or French and German) any special status in Nova Scotia, as has been occasionally assumed, as the original language clause to the 1841 act was amended four years later to include all "other languages." In 1864, when the government finally succeeded in passing the Free Schools Act, which established that all children could freely attend the common schools in their district and that expenses would be met by compulsory subscription, the language clause was dropped altogether. This effectively established an English language educational system throughout Nova Scotia. Amendments in 1865 further strengthened the English orientation, insisting that all teachers pass provincial examinations or enroll in the normal school, the province's monolingually English teacher training school, recently established in Truro. Ironically, that weak provision permitting the use of Gaelic in Nova Scotia's schools was removed at the very time the Scots were assuming the mantle as the province's largest ethnic group.

The provisions of the 1841 Education Act underscored the obstacles the Gaelic language would face in Nova Scotia. In spite of their large numbers, the best Gaels could hope for from their own educational system was begrudging permission to temporarily use Gaelic to provide their children with an otherwise thoroughly English education. No provision was made for the teaching of Gaelic itself, for training Gaelic teachers, for developing a Gaelic curriculum, for procuring or producing any Gaelic books, or for teaching any Gaelic subject matter. As the 1857 statutes on education demonstrated, schools wishing to receive educational accreditation and funding were required to have a profoundly English orientation:

> At all academies receiving assistance hereunder, instruction shall be given in the classics, agriculture, chemistry, the practical branches of the mathematics, algebra, geography, English grammar, history and composition, and also in one of or more of the modern languages. (*Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia*, 1857, Chapter 60, Section 20)

In other words, Gaelic-speaking students were to be taught English grammar, English history, English literature and composition, Greek, Latin, and at least one modern language but not Gaelic or anything about Gaelic. Indeed, the superintendent of education indicated that the main priority of the Nova Scotian educational system was to acquaint students with the genius of the English intellect.

> English reading is the most important branch of intellectual school education. Beginning with the earliest attempts of school instruction; when developed to its full extent, it places within reach of the pupil all the rich treasures of English literature, making the wisest and best of men his daily companions, and giving him, in his ordinary avocations, in all his difficulties, duties and aspirations, the counsel and aid of all human wisdom and of Divine revelation. (*Education Report*, 1850, Nova Scotia Superintendent of Education, John William Dawson: 51)

The superintendent's contention that "all human wisdom" and "the thoughts of the "wisest and best of men" not to mention "Divine revelation" were apparently uniquely accessible through the medium of English literature underlined the depth of anglocentricism in educational administration in the province. While it was critical for the progress and well-being of English speakers to be acquainted with the best examples of their own literature and to be thoroughly educated in their own history, it was considered equally critical that Gaels and other ethnic groups not be acquainted with theirs. Indeed, many 19th-century English educationalists considered the mere existence of these cultures to be an obstacle to good education and, ultimately, to the wider progress of civilization.

> In the greater part of the Island of Cape Breton, the recent settlement of the country, the poverty of the people, the circumstances that the vernacular tongue of the people is French or Gaelic and the consequent carelessness regarding English education, are great barriers to the improvement of the schools. (*Education Report*, 1850, Nova Scotia Superintendent of Education, John William Dawson)
>
> … the teacher has to labour under many disadvantages … from a circumstance which is peculiar to this country… and that circumstance is the perpetual contest which the teacher has to wage in combating the peculiarities of idiom and pronunciation consequent on the prevalence of the Gaelic language. This to persons having a limited acquaintance with its effects upon a school may seem a matter of trivial importance, yet perhaps but few realize fully how great an obstacle it is to progress in the acquisition of a thorough English education in the

> county. (*Annual Report*, Superintendent of Education, Inspector's Report, Victoria County, 1870)

Rather than dealing with the main obstacle to education in Gaelic communities — the fact that children were being taught in a language that almost none of them understood — educators helped to perpetuate the myth that Gaelic was an inherently "backward" language unsuited to advanced intellectual function and incapable of fulfilling any institutional role. Moreover, they propounded the belief that Gaelic's mere existence presented a formidable obstacle to the education and advancement of Gaels.

Unfortunately, such attitudes were by no means unique to Nova Scotia. In 19th-century British educational circles, it was suggested that the reason Gaelic children were finding their English-only schooling difficult was simply because they were stupid, that Gaelic was incapable of communicating abstract thought, that Gaelic had no real intellectual history and was of little intrinsic value, and that it might actually inhibit children from accomplishing the one really important goal of education — learning a useful language like English.

All of these ideas were accepted to a greater or lesser degree by educational authorities. For instance, a report written on education in the Isle of Skye, in 1841 claimed that, "... were the Gaelic taught first it would be almost impossible to adopt the tone of the voice to English pronunciation." In the later 19th century, prominent Scottish educationalists, Donald Ross and Dr. Stewart made even more damning statements:

> There is no great poem, no great history, no great work of philosophy or science in Gaelic ... The existing Gaelic literature is meagre in quantity and in quality finds its equal every Saturday. (Donald Ross in Durcacz: 204)
>
> That Gaelic is in moribund condition need not be mourned. It will be of much more value and interest when it is dead. (Dr. Stewart in Durcacz: 204)

Implicit in the attitudes of English-speaking educationalists was an assumption of intellectual inferiority on the part of other ethnic groups. Defending a similar English-only educational policy in India in 1835, Thomas Macaulay contemptuously dismissed India's phenomenally rich intellectual heritage.

> The question now before us is simply whether, when it is in our power to teach this language [English], we shall teach languages in which, by universal confession, there are no books on any subject which deserve to be compared with our own ... And whether, when we can patronize sound philosophy and true history, we shall countenance, at the public expense, medical doctrines which would disgrace an English farrier, astronomy which would move laughter from girls at an English boarding school, history abounding in kings thirty feet high ... and geography made of seas of treacle and seas of butter. (Thomas Macaulay in Durcacz, 205)

Educators like these and others in influential institutional positions, who just as unequivocally dismissed Gaelic culture, were accorded a great deal of authority on the matter of language, culture, and education. But their authority was based on their standing in English society and their command of that culture; whether they actually understood anything about the other cultures they were denigrating was irrelevant. While English-speaking Nova Scotians considered it deeply prejudicial to the interests of their community to have to deal with an institutional infrastructure that did not operate in their language — even for something as trivial as the appointment of municipal officials and the payment of poor rates, as in the example related earlier from Colchester County — it was considered perfectly reasonable for Gaels to do so and to have these sorts of extraordinary views of their culture propounded and, after 1864, paid for by their own compulsory subscriptions to the central educational authority.

In spite of this disheartening environment of prejudice and misconception, attempts were made to penetrate the invisible barrier that kept Gaelic out of institutions. In neighbouring Prince Edward Island, petitions were made to the legislature in 1857 and again in 1868 to request that Gaelic enjoy at least the same educational status that French had been given. Considering that Scots in Prince Edward Island nearly outnumbered all other ethnic groups combined and had a population more than double that of the English and nearly five times the size of the French, this might have seemed a reasonable request. It was, instead, rejected with the same tired old litany of myths regarding the unsuitability of Gaelic to such endeavour and the claim that all Gaels could really speak English anyway — the latter claim bluntly contradicted by the government's own education reports even a generation later.

In Nova Scotia, where Scots also formed the majority of the population, similar intransigence was met. In 1879, Mr. MacGillivray of Antigonish addressed the issue of language and education in the House of Assembly. Responding to the concerns of members representing French-speaking districts, he outlined his hope that better provision for French-speaking teachers in French districts would be made in the near future. Referring to his own experience as a Gaelic speaker, he highlighted the importance of learning in the mother tongue and stressed how necessary it was for teachers to be competent in the vernacular of the community. Mr. LeBlanc of Richmond County, enthusiastically supported his assessment of the situation, while another member of the House, Dr. Campbell, agreed that the matter should receive serious attention. However, when a third member, Mr. McCurdy, urged that any such bonus for French teachers in French districts also be made available for Gaelic teachers in the far more extensive Gaelic districts of the province, consensus quickly evaporated.

Mr. LeBlanc dismissed the suggestion, claiming that there were no Gaelic teachers and that there were not likely to be any in the future. LeBlanc's assertion led another member, John A. Morrison of Victoria County, to rise and give an angry speech in Gaelic praising the value inherent in the Gaelic language and outlining its importance. Morrison's Gaelic speech prompted a reply in French from Mr. LeBlanc, who backpedaled somewhat from his earlier position by stating he was not arguing *against* Gaelic provision. What he was arguing for or against, however, was not made much clearer by his response to

Morrison's Gaelic broadside. He went on to explain, essentially, that multilingualism was in contradiction to the aims of the Department of Education and should, therefore, not be encouraged but that supporting French would, somehow, not prejudice those same anglocentric aims. He also argued that educational support for French in French districts was very weak and that such weak provision was detrimental to the local community's interests and, therefore, support should be increased, while at the same time, arguing that support for Gaelic in the more populous Gaelic districts was even weaker but, therefore, should be eliminated altogether.

In spite of the glaring gaps in consistency and, indeed, fairness that the debate revealed regarding language provision, the whole matter was brought to an abrupt halt by Mr. James, the representative for Lunenburg County, who gave a short speech in German. Mr. James had no particular point to make to the House, declaring that he only wished to give a sample of the language spoken in his constituency, apologizing for his lack of fluency while so doing. Whether or not his intent was to stifle debate on the issue of the status of Gaelic, as his fellow representative from Lunenburg County, Senator Kaulbach, would do in Ottawa 11 years later, that is what he succeeded in doing, and the general tenor of his contribution suggested that neither he nor the House considered the Gaelic matter worth debating any further. (*Debates and Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 17 March 1879)

The upshot of all of this was that Gaelic children throughout 19th-century Gaelic Nova Scotia did without any form of provincially organized education in their own language and were, similarly, taught nothing positive about their own history and culture in the provincial educational system. Gaelic-speaking teachers were paid by Gaelic-speaking parents to teach Gaelic-speaking students through the medium of English about subjects deemed important in English-speaking society. In his history of Cape North, Rev. D. MacDonald explained that, when he attended school in this entirely Gaelic-speaking district of Northern Cape Breton in the 1860s, his Gaelic-speaking teacher, Charles G. Buchanan, used Gaelic only to make English material intelligible to his entirely Gaelic-speaking classes. (*Cape North and Vicinity: Pioneer Families; History and Chronicles*, Rev. D. MacDonald, 1933) Evidence from throughout Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island suggests that such compliance with externally designed educational goals was the norm rather than the exception and that Gaelic was rarely used for any other purpose. Any understanding of Gaelic grammar, pronunciation, spelling, literature, history, music, or achievement would have to be learned somewhere other than in the Nova Scotia public school system.

It was not until the last decade of the 19th century, however, that this system of education fully extended its culturally dislocating reach into all corners of the Nova Scotian *Gàidhealtachd*. Inverness and Victoria counties in Cape Breton were the most thoroughly Gaelic sections of the province and also, it seems, among the least well served by English schooling. School inspector John Y. Gunn commented on the state of education in the two counties in 1887:

> "Educationally this territory is a 'a great lone land' without sectional arrangement of any description. Thinly settled and precarious in their pursuits it is difficult if not impossible for these isolated settlements to secure the services of a regularly accredited teacher." The inspector went on to observe that the people in these areas lived in what he termed "Egyptian darkness," such use of language suggesting that this region was empty and wild and that its people lived in darkness and ignorance. The Highland settlers were furthermore reported to be indifferent to the 'benefits' of English schooling — no doubt because they were still enmeshed in their own cultural forms.
>
> Songs of the highest quality by numerous bards were produced … [and] entered naturally into the song repertoire … the stock of historical legend transmitted from Scotland was supplemented by accounts of new experiences — perceived and recounted in a purely Gaelic style — and the instrumental folk tradition, most notably the fiddle, flourished to a degree certainly unmatched elsewhere in Scottish Gaeldom. (Cox 1994, 25–26)
>
> By the turn of the century, teachers scolded and spanked their students in order to prevent them from speaking Gaelic in the schools, or even in the schoolyard. It is no wonder, as Sinclair suggested, that there is a tendency for the "language of the school [to] displace the language of the home" and for the attitudes towards language that are imbibed at school to replace those learned at home. At this point, Gaelic became a 'minority' language even in Cape Breton, where most people still spoke it. (Cox 1994, 25)

For generations, Gaelic-speaking children were saddled with an educational system that taught in a language that was not used in their homes or communities and that failed to draw in any of the in native intellectual strengths or cultural patterns. The effect of such a policy on general educational levels throughout a large part of the province has yet to be considered. It is an open question how such an uncomfortable environment might have affected school attendance in Gaelic-speaking districts, let alone learning. Lori Vitale Cox point out that in some areas of the province Gaelic literacy was actually lost following the advent of the new compulsory English educational system but not effectively replaced with English literacy. For instance, Gaelic literate (heads of) families founded the community of Black Point in northern Cape Breton in the late 19th century, but a study of the same district conducted 100 years after the introduction of compulsory English education reported that many of the adults of the community were functionally illiterate in English. (Cox 1994, 28)

> The provincial educational system has played a role not only in the decline of the Gaelic language and culture, but also in the social and economic marginalization of the Cape Breton Gael. Gaelic children in Cape Breton traditionally have had no opportunity to learn the language in the compulsory public school system, but neither have they had the opportunity to acquire the kind of English education that was available in other areas of the province. The children of the 'invisible' Gaelic

> minority in northern Cape Breton still leave school at an earlier age and with less schooling than their counterparts in mainland Nova Scotia. (Cox 1994, 37)

The effects of such institutional exclusion and prejudice have been readily apparent. The better the access Gaels did have to formal education, the more likely they were to be misinformed about their native culture and its achievements and potential. The more of this education they received, the more likely they were to play an even more effective role in further undermining the natural range of the language by refusing to use it themselves in any official capacity and also by encouraging, or at least acquiescing in its continued exclusion from the community's own institutions when they came to positions of authority. In effect, educators turned myth into reality simply by believing firmly enough in it and having the power to act in accordance with their beliefs. Gaels were caught in a vicious circle.

> Gaelic in the Cape Breton schools has been discouraged on three different levels: exclusion of the language as a medium of communication; exclusion from the curriculum of both the language and the culture which it embodied; and, in taking these actions, transmission of negative attitudes concerning the value and usefulness of the language and culture to the community at large. Without doubt, negative attitudes like these have been entirely responsible for the shift to English in the last fifty or sixty years ... if we liken the fortunes of 'Gaeldom' to a wave which has left pools as it recedes, the Gàidhealtachd in Cape Breton may be regarded as a particularly deep one. But the tide has gone out and in a few years these pools will be dry. The provincial school system and its policies must at this point in time take their share of blame in this process. (Cox 1994, 36–37)

Gaelic and Post-Secondary Education

Advanced educational training in Gaelic society was even more lacking than public school education in the 18th and 19th centuries — arguably an even larger casualty of the failed transition from medieval to modern education in the Scottish Highlands. Plans were made by Highland chiefs at various junctures in the modern era to establish a centre for higher education somewhere in the western Highlands or islands but the accelerating decline of Gaelic society frustrated those designs. Even a more modest but still important discussion in 1847 to establish a college in the Highlands for the training of ministers and teachers came to nothing.

The inability to develop a higher learning infrastructure anywhere in the Highlands was debilitating in a number of ways. It made advanced professional training more difficult for Gaels to attain (in any language) and ensured that no Gaelic-specific curriculum, texts, or educational philosophy could be developed. It also contributed to the sense that advanced intellectual endeavours could be pursued only outside Gaelic culture and even outside the physical Gaelic world. In Nova Scotia, by contrast, two centres of higher education were established in the Gaelic district of the province in the 19th century, giving Gaels in the New World an important opportunity, not available in Scotland, to marry their language and culture to higher education.

The first such local initiative was the founding of Pictou Academy in 1816. This was the first non-denominational centre of its type in Nova Scotia, and it had critical support even within the Catholic community in neighbouring Antigonish County. In spite of its location in a strongly Gaelic-speaking county, however, the academy had no Gaelic content whatsoever. Whether this tells us anything about cultural attitudes in Pictou is debatable, since the academy was founded by a Lowland Scot, Rev. Thomas McCulloch, who does not appear to have included speaking the Gaelic language among his many noteworthy abilities. Also working against a Gaelic orientation was the fact that McCulloch's academy was modeled on Edinburgh University, one of the leading universities in the British Empire and located in a strongly English-speaking town.

Pictou Academy's goal to become an important regional non-denominational centre of higher learning would have made it the pre-eminent educational facility in Gaelic Nova Scotia and might have provided evidence of how the school would have accommodated the culture of the majority of inhabitants in Eastern Nova Scotia had this goal been realized. One cannot help but draw the conclusion that there was sufficient skill available to make such an accommodation had the plans gone ahead. Joseph Howe, who became premier of Nova Scotia, described several of his friends in that part of the province, including Bishop Fraser of Antigonish who was a board member of Pictou Academy and a supporter of the proposition to expand the academy's function.

> I met four men, each differing in training, professional character, but each in his own time sufficiently remarkable to make his society very attractive. These were Dr. Fraser, who became Catholic Bishop of the Diocese, Dr. MacDonald, then in full enjoyment of a large county practice, the Rev. Thomas Trotter, Presbyterian pastor of the village congregation, and our old friend Sandy MacDougall. They were all Scotchmen or of Scotch descent, were fast friends and cronies. Each would stand up for his own Church or his own snuff box, but they would all stand up for old Scotland, and fight to prove the thistle more fragrant than a rose. I would have given a trifle to have seen and heard our four old friends once more chaffing each other in Latin, English, Greek and Gaelic. With these four men I remained on terms of intimacy and friendship while they lived. Nothing impressed me so much as to hear questions of philosophy, of practical or abstract science, or of European politics, discussed…with the keenest of logic and fullness of information scarcely met within the capital (Campbell & MacLean 1974, 54-55).

How such a regional institution of higher learning would have adapted to reflect its overwhelmingly Gaelic constituency will never be known. When it was originally founded in 1816, Pictou Academy did not apply for degree-granting status, in order to keep peace with the small but powerful, Anglican ascendancy, which supported King's College (Campbell & MacLean 1974, 207). Despite its attempts to remain nondenominational, Pictou Academy was constantly buffeted by the turbulent religious breezes of the day and, in 1838, Reverend McCulloch accepted the position of president of the newly created Dalhousie University in Halifax. Pictou Academy remained an important local centre of education, but without McCulloch at the helm never achieved the status of college or university. The only institution of higher learning that emerged (and stayed) in Gaelic Nova Scotia was the College of St. Francis Xavier, later to become St. Francis Xavier University. But, in spite of its location, its cultural roots, and its constituency, it too found no place for Gaelic in its central philosophy of education.

Unlike Pictou Academy, St. Francis Xavier University was founded by a Gael, Bishop Colin MacKinnon, a graduate of East Bay College, and was designed specifically to meet the educational needs of a Catholic population that was roughly 70 per cent Highland Scottish. In fact, when it first opened its doors in Arichat, Cape Breton, in 1853 (a temporary home until the site in Antigonish was ready in 1855), 73 per cent of the students were Highlanders. Early memoirs even mention that the traditional Gaelic sport of *camanachd*, known generally as *shinty* in the Scottish Highlands and *hurley* in Ireland, was played among students and faculty for recreation. (Cameron 1996, 393, 23) But as for Gaelic content in the system of education itself, it was telling that the first rector, Rev. Dr. John Schulte, could speak six languages, but not Gaelic or French, the native language of more than 80 per cent of the more than 100,000 Catholics in eastern Nova Scotia whom the College of St. Francis Xavier was meant to serve (Cameron 1996, 20, 6). St. Francis Xavier historian Jim Cameron described the situation.

> The absence of the Highlander's native tongue of Gaelic at St. F.X. reveals the pragmatic bent of the bishop's vision for collegiate education and social aspirations for his youthful countrymen. In colonial Nova Scotia, English was the language of commerce, politics, and the professions; hence, expert facility in its use was essential to the preparation of socially mobile graduates. Highland culture and traditions were not a priority; social advancement and integration were. Bishop MacKinnon apparently shared a widespread attitude: in general the Gaels of eastern Nova Scotia did not want their children to "waste time" on their native tongue, but instead to learn English so "they could succeed in the world." Moreover, Highland Catholics, with their recent background in poverty, illiteracy, and oppression, often felt a sense of social inferiority, as they compared themselves to their Presbyterian neighbours in Pictou County, or to people in the urban centres of Nova Scotia and New England. Long into the twentieth century, some Highland descendants would remain ashamed and embarrassed by the memory of the economic and social plight of their forbears. This attitude surely revealed the extent to which the contemporary social and cultural standards of the dominant society had been internalized by the Highland descendants (Cameron 1996, 32).

This suggestion that Gaels wanted to abandon their language and "succeed" in the real world through education is somewhat contradicted by numerous educational reports throughout 19th-century Nova Scotia that accuse Gaelic districts of paying fairly scant attention to education. The various messages from officialdom and from within the community itself are frequently contradictory on this subject. However, one gets the distinct impression that the Gaelic leadership was eager to see their countrymen in their own image — successful, well educated and able to move fluently through the corridors of an English-speaking power structure — rather than as they were — Gaelic speaking, rural dwelling, and struggling with very localized realities. Bishop John Cameron's comment in 1879, "that Gaelic is fast dying out and giving way to English" (Cameron 1996, 428) is otherwise puzzling considering that even a generation later when census figures detailing language use first became available, the Scottish population of the bishop's own Antigonish County was still more than 70 per cent Gaelic speaking, while the proportion in rural Cape Breton was generally above 80 per cent or 90 per cent. Neither group of figures suggested a language that was likely to have been "fast dying out" in the Catholic communities of eastern Nova Scotia a generation earlier. Gaelic was undoubtedly in faster decline among the Gaelic leadership in Nova Scotia, however.

The decision to promote the exclusive use of English at St. Francis Xavier University was undoubtedly a practical one, but it was also a decision made amidst considerable cultural confusion on the part of the Gaelic elite. The college was designed to improve social mobility for Catholics but not at the cost of the coherence of the community itself. The abandonment of Catholicism, along with Gaelic, would have effectively removed many of the barriers to social mobility the community faced but would have self-evidently weakened the community in the view of the clergy-faculty and so was never seriously considered. That Gaelic was also an important part of that community's social cohesion was simply not admitted.

Certainly, faculty was not blind to the importance of language and culture in helping sustain the community whose interests they sought to defend and advance. French was included as a subject of study at St. Francis Xavier University almost from the earliest years, and in 1921 a French chair complete with four bursaries was established along with the message, "Come to our college and learn the best English and science we can give you. That you may feel we are not trying to rob you of your language and traditions, we shall provide suitable and satisfactory instruction in French language and literature." (Cameron 1996, 165) The message this sent to Acadians was that they and their language and culture were considered important; the message it sent to the massive Scottish Gaelic majority, who had founded the college and for whom no such provision had been made, can only be guessed at.

Using Gaelic as a medium of instruction in higher education should not have been that much of a stretch for the Gaelic community at the time, had it been considered desirable to do so. Unlike Acadians, who would found their own French language college in Nova Scotia in 1880, and would need to import a foreign order to provide instruction, Gaels maintained a native, highly educated, bilingual elite, who would provide the bulk of their college's faculty. Early centres of higher education, such as St. Francis Xavier University, were small and did not represent a radical departure in pedagogy from the classically oriented curriculum that suffused the lower levels of public education and that Gaels had proved capable of delivering through the medium of their own language in Nova Scotia. The Gaelic community, then, had at least some experience in Nova Scotia of teaching a classically oriented curriculum through the Gaelic language and would provide the core of the college's faculty — a fluently bilingual (in most cases, multilingual), and highly literate elite. The most important obstacle preventing Gaels from creating a truly Gaelic institution of higher learning in Nova Scotia appears to have been attitude.

Gaelic's lack of official status anywhere and the absence of any other Gaelic centres of higher learning undoubtedly weighed against the creation of a truly Gaelic college, as did the desire to make educational provision for the English, Irish, and French Catholic minority in eastern Nova Scotia, but the complete absence of Gaelic from St. Francis Xavier University remains difficult to explain. If the college were being wholly practical in using English, then why did it later establish a French chair with the explanation that it did not wish to "rob" an ethnic group of its language and traditions by failing to provide adequate training in their language and literature? If ethnicity and culture were as important as this suggested, why had Gaelic been ignored, the native language of 70 per cent of the college's founding student population?

It was in 1891 that Scottish Gaelic was first taught at St. Francis Xavier University. In the *Casket* of April 25, 1891 there is the notice "something new in the College this year was a class in Gaelic. Some twenty students learned to read and write Gaelic under the instruction of Mr. D. M. MacAdam."

Such inconsistent action did not originate with St. Francis Xavier since the college was then a new institution with an essentially clean slate, but arose from attitudes within the Gaelic community itself. Inconsistency around Gaelic issues was evident among the Gaelic elite throughout the Maritimes. The same sense of social justice and community development that would later lead Rev. Jimmy Tompkins to found the French chair at St. Francis Xavier University to make amends for historical wrongs inflicted upon Acadians, also inspired two Highland Scottish priests to spearhead the fight for French language rights for Acadians in Prince Edward Island. Yet, at the same time, a locally sponsored petition to extend language instruction subsidies already enjoyed by French in Prince Edward Island to the more extensive Gaelic-speaking districts was voted down by A. A. MacDonald, a prominent politician who would later become Lieutenant Governor. Ironically enough, in his memoirs he would later list as one of his great regrets the fact that he had not learned Gaelic as a boy when he had such ample opportunity to do so. His sense of dislocation from his heritage did not prevent him from taking action to ensure that his fellow Highlanders in Prince Edward Island would suffer a similar loss.

The inconsistent actions and commentary of the Gaelic elite suggest massive strain within Gaelic society in the late 19th century. Bishop Cameron's premature eulogy on the Gaelic language in Nova Scotia may have been an example of the out-of-touch elitism that Rev. Jimmy Tompkins condemned at St. Francis Xavier University at a later date and motivated him to make his famous push for education "for the people," but more likely it was nothing more than a very honest impression of the situation with which the bishop had his most intimate knowledge – the reluctance of Gaels to use Gaelic in institutional settings or when in contact with powerful, educated figures, like the bishop, who spoke good English, no matter how poor their own command of English may have been. It was also undoubtedly a sign of the declining importance of Gaelic to more highly educated Gaels.

Education, Socialization, and Culture

The continued exclusion of Gaelic from education and such normal domains of use would have multifarious effects and was probably the single most important cause of the unusually rapid decline of the language in Nova Scotia in the 20th century. Because the domains of exclusion for lower or non-status languages are most commonly the domains of wealth, power, and prestige, it is understandable that speakers of those languages should be inclined to make the practical decision to learn the language that appears to give them best access to those desired ends. In linguistic studies the negative effect most frequently noted in areas where it is not the local language that affords this opportunity is low self-esteem — particularly, but not exclusively, with regard to the native language and culture. Speakers of the threatened language come to believe that there is an organic link between the incoming language and the domains of power and prestige — that there is something that the incoming language has, which their own language must lack, that makes it more suitable for such prestigious or elite activity. As institutions, which act as the chief engines of assimilation, come to play a more prominent role in life, the momentum for cultural change accelerates.

An entire structure develops that promotes the adoption of the powerful language and justifies the process as being in the long-term best interest of the communities involved. The impetus for change comes not only from the cultural assumptions under which institutions operate and the message they, therefore, seek to actively articulate but also via the manner in which they function in society and the message that is inadvertently sent. Because institutions develop in direct proportion to the available resources — in other words, the richer the area, the more institutionalized it becomes — it is all too easy to develop the belief that in some way it is the language with which the institutions are associated that brings the relative prosperity to the district rather than the relative prosperity of the district that brings in the institutions and the associated language. As the native language declines in its formerly most populous and prosperous heartlands, it becomes increasingly associated with the less populous and less prosperous districts from which of the dominant language the institutions are largely absent.

> Languages in decline are often confined to rural areas, and associations are made between the language and an unwanted past (and present). One observer of Nova Scotia Gaelic said that the language was one of "toil, hardship and scarcity" while English was the language of "refinement and culture"; another observed that, from the earliest emigrations, the settlers "carried with them the idea that education was coincident with a knowledge of English." (Edwards 1984, 107)

One of the most pernicious effects of the exclusion of Gaelic from the elite domains of society is that it was generally the most prosperous districts of Gaelic regions and almost always the natural leadership of the community that received the earliest and most thorough exposure to these anglicizing institutions. The very regions that should have acted as the engines for the culture's continued adaptation and prosperity encouraged its stagnation and decline; and the very people who became best placed to consolidate the language's strengths and ensure its healthy evolution and continued development were, by the very mechanism that placed them in their positions of authority, educated to do exactly the opposite.

> Mead (1942) noted that the 'modern' educational process tends to separate the educated from their cultural roots. Getting a formal education in Cape Breton thus meant giving up the Gaelic culture. Once formally educated, there was really no place for that individual in a rural Cape Breton community, except perhaps as a minister, a priest or a nun; and Cape Breton was probably one of the few places that was entirely able to supply itself with clergy. (Cox 1994, 31)

The confused loyalties that resulted could be very difficult for even the otherwise most clear-sighted individuals to reconcile — personal affection versus institutional pragmatism, identity versus aspiration. It is hardly surprising, as a result, that there are numerous accounts of prominent leaders — political figures and educators, for example — who, on the one hand, demonstrated a deep and sincere love for their culture and language on a personal level but, on the other hand, bluntly told their colleagues, confidants, students, and children that Gaelic was not useful for getting on in the world and therefore refused to give it the meaningful institutional support that could have made a difference to the language's fate and that their powerful positions might well have enabled them to do. John Edwards described the dilemma:

> This package can be interpreted as one of passivity, hypocrisy, lack of leadership or betrayal; it can also be seen as the reflection of an often poorly articulated accommodation of opposing pressures, a rather poignant indicator of conflicting sentiments which the speakers of unthreatened varieties, secure in some linguistic mainstream, may find difficult to appreciate or, worse, may ridicule. (Edwards 1984, 112)

The development of an inferiority complex around a declining language is a feature often noted in studies of language decline and was certainly being remarked upon in Gaelic Nova Scotia by that period. Included in the list of observers would be Peg MacGillivray, whose humorous semi-fictional reminiscences of life in the environs of Antigonish Town in the early 20th century featured several examples of this reluctance to use Gaelic. More significant examples of such linguistic embarrassment came from Cape Breton observers. Jonathan G. MacKinnon, editor of Cape Breton's *MacTalla*, visited Prince Edward Island in 1896 and published a valuable and timely account of the attitudes toward Gaelic there and in Cape Breton:

> I spent two or three happy days in Heatherdale. I met many of my relatives there, and although we had never met one another since our grandfathers left the Isle of Skye, we soon became well acquainted ... The populace in Valleyfield and Heatherdale are as Gaelic, I believe, as any to be found in Canada ... There are but few in the parish who don't understand Gaelic, and who are not very fond of it. There are three or four other congregations round about Valleyfield where little is preached but Gaelic. I noticed, in Prince Edward Island, as one could also notice on Cape Breton, that there are places where the Gaels have forgotten their Gaelic,

> or if they have not, they are making every effort to hide it. One will meet people and know without any difficulty that Gaelic is their best language, but they will not speak one iota of it to you, unless you force them to do so, against their will. The children of these people have not a word of the language of their ancestors, and one can truthfully categorize them with those people of whom the Bard said "they lost their Gaelic, and anything better they never got." And the English spoken by those who would belittle the Gaelic, I would not have it for anything if it could be at all avoided. I met several people of that type in Prince Edward Island, but they did not surprise me at all. I could say to them as was said by the man who met the ghost, "Away with you fellow, I have seen your like before." (Jonathan G. MacKinnon, *MacTalla*, 1896; translation, Norman MacDonald)

MacKinnon dismissed this rejection of Gaelic in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia with perhaps more optimism and confidence than he really felt. For MacKinnon and many other Gaels the process of language and cultural decline was an often painful and humiliating experience. One of the most striking examples of this strain comes from a Gaelic song composed around the same period by the Bard MacDiarmid of Cape Breton's North Shore. In the song the bard was in Boston feeling lonely and missing the sound of Gaelic when to his delight he suddenly encountered a fine Boston lady whom he recognized as a former acquaintance from Cape Breton:

> I spoke kindly,
> "How are you, my old sweetheart?"
> I reached out my hand towards her,
> and I said, "Dear, shake it.
> Are you well and in good health,
> and do you stay in the city?
> How are your father and your mother;
> are my relatives healthy,
> and every person, and every person?"
>
> She answered me sullenly,
> "You're a Scotchman I reckon;
> I don't know your Gaelic,
> perhaps you're from Cape Breton,
> and I guess you're a farmer —
> you're too saucy for better —
> so I will not shake hands,
> and I would rather at present
> be going off, be going off."
>
> My cheeks burned with shame,
> my anger stirred quickly;
> about my mother's family
> I had no cause to regret;
> and since she herself was without modesty,

a voice came to my tongue,
and I said to her, in Gaelic,
without a loud voice, without a bad word,
I said this, I said this.

The bard then proceeded to praise the good manners, beauty, and modesty that his acquaintance had once possessed before she had left both Cape Breton and her Gaelic culture behind her and then he unleashed his anger.

A dwelling at the ends of the earth eternally
and a thousand misfortunes and curses
to yourself and to your sort
grown so haughty and conceited,
when you come about here
There will be a new suit of clothes and bonnet;
Gaelic will be to the back,
and you will be considered as a "Yankee,"
you perpetrators of devastation, you perpetrators of devastation.
(Author's translation)

Pragmatic choices based on inconsistency, a rather poor assessment of the facts, and a deeply internalized sense of inferiority were already plaguing the Gaelic community in the 19th century. The extent to which this helped further undermine, rather than develop the rural *Gàidhealtachd* can never fully be known, but its effects are hinted at in the very different development trajectories followed by Gaels and Acadians from that period forward.

Like Gaels, Acadians formed a cultural underclass in Nova Scotia. Both groups had difficulty making effective use of the English-dominated educational, administrative, and mercantile structures in the province. Both groups were considered poor and backward. If French Canadian culture in Quebec was dismissed as a backward version of French culture, Acadian culture was equally frequently dismissed as a backward version of French Canadian culture. Gaelic was considered sufficiently backward all on its own. Both communities struggled with assimilation pressures and with calls from within to adopt English in order to progress. But Acadians made some critical early gains in education that appear to have begun turning the tide in favour of their language and culture.

In spite of their late start in education, Acadians made strides forward, particularly in the latter half of the 19th century. From 1832, a series of attempts were made to establish French post-secondary educational institutions among Acadians. The first to have lasting success was Collège Saint-Joseph, founded in Memramcook, New Brunswick, in 1864 by Fr. Camille Lefebvre of Quebec. It achieved university status in 1888 and became one of a series of institutions (later subsumed in the Université de Moncton) training Acadians for a professional life in French from the mid-19th century on. (Gilberte Couturier Le Blanc, Alcide Godin, Aldéo Renaud, "French Education in the Maritimes, 1604–1992", *Acadia of the Maritimes:* 551–53) The emergence from these institutions of a cadre of well-educated Acadians played an important role in fostering a growing sense of confidence in the Acadian community and the commitment to improve conditions in their communities.

> At the beginning of the 1880s Acadian leaders felt that they were in a strong enough position to develop a comprehensive program. This elite, many of whom were graduates of the Collège Saint-Joseph, already exerted considerable influence; their ideas were put forward in the newspaper, *Le Moniteur acadien*; and finally, a middle class had begun to take shape. This is probably the most likely explanation for the "national" Acadian convention, a major event that took place at the Collège Saint-Joseph in 1881. (Thériault 1995, 65)

At a time when the Gaelic middle class was being undone through anglicization, the Acadians began redeveloping a French professional rank that was strongly devoted to its culture and community. The first pan-Acadian or "national" convention held in 1881 during a period of widespread economic depression in Canada which saw massive out-migration for the United States, particularly from the Maritimes, was an expression of this development. At the second conference, held in Prince Edward Island in 1884, a national flag, holiday, and anthem were chosen. However, unlike the virtually endless stream of Scottish societies that appeared and disappeared but rarely got very far beyond this sort of highly symbolic cultural focus, the Acadian conferences also sought to address economic, social, educational, and cultural development, discussing the issues of mobility versus assimilation and wealth versus poverty at a time when conditions in the Maritimes were changing rapidly. They were very concerned with practical results rather than mere symbology. At their 1890 national convention held at Pointe-de-l'Église, for instance, they supported plans for the establishment of the first French college in Nova Scotia. That same year, Eudists were brought to Nova Scotia, with the approval of Monsignor O'Brien, Archbishop of Halifax, to found Collège Sainte-Anne. In 1892 Collège Sainte-Anne was granted university status.

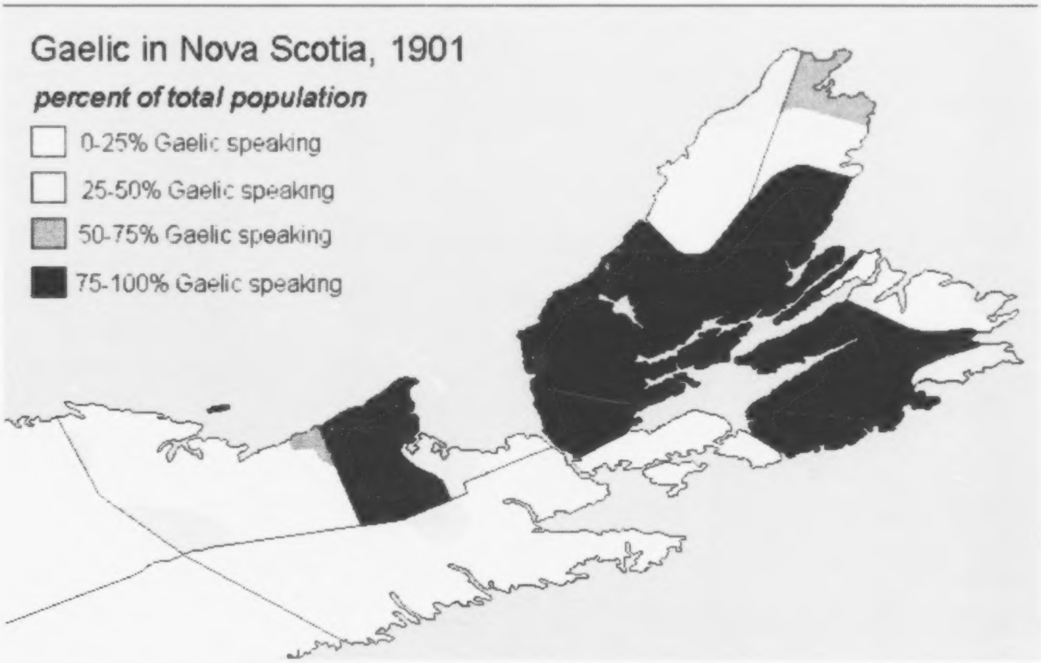
Thanks in no small part to an emerging middle class educated in the French language, Acadians were able to develop the cultural tools to deal with their problems as a community and to form a vision of a French future. Out-migration, so badly draining the Maritimes and other parts of Canada, was rejected as damaging to the community as a whole, and strategies were developed to make the local communities more attractive and more viable. By contrast, there were those in the Gaelic leadership who seemed to be sending the opposite message by effectively teaching the youth of their community that their history, language, and traditions — everything that they saw around them — could not be a practical part of any future in Nova Scotia. In effect, they taught them that their language and culture were obstacles to be overcome or escaped from. It was, therefore, pointless to expend any serious zeal and energy on strengthening Gaelic culture and, by extension, the communities where that culture found its fullest expression. The skills they were developing could find much fuller expression in non-Gaelic communities. Gaels never articulated a vision of a successful Gaelic community in Nova Scotia but instead struggled to adapt to externally derived definitions of success and progress. During the 20th century their communities would disintegrate culturally and economically.

Gaelic Language and Status: The 20th Century

The 19th century had been a difficult one for Gaelic culture in North America (as it had been in Scotland and Ireland), but Gaelic's position in Canada was still comparatively strong. In spite of heavy turn-of-the-century immigration from Eastern Europe, the Gaelic language had only slipped back to fourth place in the national standings behind German, according to the 1901 Canadian census. In Nova Scotia, it had also clearly lost considerable ground, but its 50,000 speakers (probably a conservative estimate), comprising 11 per cent of the population, still outnumbered all language groups in the province combined, except for English, which, by this time, had assumed a commanding majority in the province. In addition, Gaels were assuming positions of the highest authority in Nova Scotia. In 1906, for example, Lieutenant Governor Duncan Fraser was welcomed to Government House with a Gaelic address from sitting members of the legislature. The Lieutenant Governor duly replied with a Gaelic speech of his own, and the exchange appeared (with English translation) in two Halifax newspapers. (*Nova Scotian and Weekly Chronicle*, Friday, 27 April 1906: 11) In the first decade of the century, Gaelic was still widely spoken in Nova Scotia, and it was possible to find Gaelic-speaking government officials, members of the judiciary, educators, university presidents, newspaper editors, and others in positions of considerable authority. Yet beneath this veneer of success, Gaelic was in serious trouble.

Unlike Nova Scotia's Black or Mi'kmaq population, Gaels did not constitute a visible minority and so did not suffer a particularly active form of discrimination. Once Catholics were granted full citizenship rights by 1830, there were no actual bars to full Gaelic participation in Nova Scotian society — provided only that Gaels did not try to participate in their native language. Popular 19th-century racial theories illustrating the inferiority and backwardness of the Celt before the all-conquering Anglo-Saxon (in some cases inventing an African ancestry for the Celts in order to make their distinction from their Aryan superiors even more telling) were still encountered but appeared to be declining in popularity as English-speaking Gaels began moving in powerful circles. From that point on, the essential "Britishness" or, in other words, "Englishness" of Gaels was increasingly emphasized. Indeed, the somewhat bizarre term "Anglo-Celtic" began surfacing during this transition, indicating that the Celts had, at long last, arrived but that their culture had not.

In spite of numbering 50,000 speakers at the turn of the century and in spite of the prominent institutional positions held by Gaelic speakers, their language was excluded from virtually all domains of social power and denied any meaningful role in the institutional infrastructure of the province, even within communities where it was the only commonly spoken language. At a time when Gaels held such offices as lieutenant governor or premier, not a single public school in Nova Scotia was noted to have been teaching through the medium of Gaelic. The school system does not appear to have offered so much as a single course on Gaelic language, literature, history, culture, or music anywhere in the province. While prominent Gaels of the period may have had a command of the Gaelic language and an understanding of Gaelic culture that would be the envy of scholars today, that was thanks entirely to the informal folk process of cultural transmission and was almost entirely irrelevant to the success they achieved or the status they enjoyed in wider Nova Scotian society. Their success and their prominence rested almost solely on the strength of their English education.


Gaelic in Nova Scotia, 1901
percent of total population
☐ 0-25% Gaelic speaking
☐ 25-50% Gaelic speaking
▨ 50-75% Gaelic speaking
■ 75-100% Gaelic speaking

The Decline of Gaelic in Pictou County

The implications of Gaelic's low status in Nova Scotia were already apparent in the returns from the 1901 census. It was clear that Gaelic still dominated the eastern regions of Nova Scotia, but what was most striking was the stunning collapse of the language in Pictou County. Gaelic survived as a significant *minority* language in only two small areas of the county: in the relatively lightly populated hill country in the west, roughly from West Branch River John into the Earltown district of Colchester County, and in the even more sparsely populated southern extreme of the county. It remained a dominant language only in a tiny northeastern corner of the county that bordered with heavily Gaelic-speaking Antigonish County and was, in fact, an extension of that larger Gaelic-speaking community. Throughout the rest of Pictou County, and especially in the most populous districts, Gaelic was wiped off the map.

The enormous decline of Gaelic in Pictou County offered a dramatic contrast to the relatively strong survival of the language in the other Scottish districts of eastern Nova Scotia and bears closer scrutiny, for what had happened in Pictou County helps to explain what would happen more slowly elsewhere in the province throughout the century that followed.

County	% Scots	% Gaelic-speakers (Total Population)	% Gaelic-speakers (Scottish Population)
Victoria	80	73	92
Inverness	71	58	82
Richmond	33	24	72
Antigonish	67	48	71
Cape Breton	56	31	56
Pictou	79	5	6

The census figures show that Pictou was quite clearly no less Scottish in its ethnicity than the other Gaelic-speaking counties in 1901 with 79 per cent of its population returned as Scottish. In fact, only Victoria County at 80 per cent had a higher proportion of Scots in its population. Pictou does appear to have had a higher proportion of Lowland Scots in its population than the other Gaelic districts, but cursory surveys of settlement maps and census returns do not suggest that this was in any way large enough to account for the remarkably low Gaelic returns. Pictou's settlement was earlier than that of Cape Breton but roughly coincidental with that of neighbouring Antigonish County. Yet, Antigonish, with a significantly smaller proportion of Scots in its population (only 67 per cent) was nearly 50 per cent Gaelic speaking — ten times that of Pictou at a mere five per cent. In all of the counties with large Scottish populations in 1901, the vast majority of those enumerated as Scots were Gaelic speaking, comprising roughly 60 per cent–90 per cent of the Scottish segment of the population. By contrast, the number of Scots in Pictou County who could speak the language was a strikingly low six per cent. What, then, was responsible for the extraordinary collapse of the language in Pictou County?

Pictou's location on the western extremity of the Nova Scotian *Gàidhealtachd* might suggest that it was simply exposed to stronger anglicizing influences from neighbouring English-speaking counties than the other better-insulated Gaelic-speaking counties to the east; but the low population along those exposed borders and the comparatively strong survival of the language in those very locations makes that an unlikely explanation. The average rural dweller in 19th century did not travel widely and was generally influenced in major cultural patterns by very local conditions. A much more likely reason for the rapid decline of Gaelic in the county and, coincidentally, the one significant variable that very clearly differentiated Pictou County from its Gaelic-speaking neighbours, was its early industrialization and urbanization.

Due to its superior harbour, its good inland communications, its relatively good farmland, and most significantly of all, its extensive coalfields, Pictou developed rapidly as an urban and industrial centre and from an early date. By 1830, Pictou town was already a prosperous centre of 1,500 souls (second in size only to Halifax) and home to the province's earliest nondenominational centre of higher education. Coal mining and steel making would fuel further growth and development. However, the 1901 census demonstrated that this growth did not result in the displacement of the Scottish population by some other large incoming language group. What rapid growth did succeed in doing was to introduce from a very early period the institutional infrastructure — particularly the educational infrastructure — that would play such a crucial part in undermining Gaelic's status in Nova Scotian communities. The inability of Gaels in Pictou County to have their culture reflected in their institutions would play the most critical role in undermining Gaelic culture in Pictou County.

Gaels formed a cultural underclass in Pictou County from their very first arrival, and the institutional framework that quickly developed in the area strongly reflected that fact. The initial settlement of Pictou was organized by the Philadelphia Company, which established prominent American settlers on the site of Pictou town in 1767. The company had been given an initial grant of 200,000 acres (80,790 ha) and though the grant did not quite turn out to be what had been expected, the early families generally had free access to enormous quantities of superior land. In order to keep their grant, they were required to settle and develop it. The 16 American families were not sufficient to meet this obligation, and they decided to recruit Highlanders to settle the area in 1773.

When the *Hector* pioneers arrived in the intended settlement, they found that the promises they had been given in Scotland had been highly misleading. Instead of farm lots along the shore, they were to be settled in dense forest far removed from the much-desired front lands where fishing was possible (indeed, essential) to supplement food stores and where transportation and communication were immeasurably more convenient. This caused an immediate contest of wills, and when the *Hector* returned in the fall with the winter supplies of food that had been promised as part of the settlement agreement, the leaders of the American settlement refused to allow the Highland immigrants to take their share unless they settled in the wooded backlands or paid cash for the supplies. Some who had money, did pay for the food, some sold clothing and other items to raise the money while others trekked overland to Col. Alexander McNutt's much larger settlement in Truro in order to find menial employment that would at least see them through to the spring and keep their families from starvation.

For many of those who were to stay in Pictou, however, the situation grew desperate, leaving them virtually destitute of supplies for the upcoming winter. Eventually they seized the stores that had been promised to feed their families, overpowering but not injuring the guards and leaving an account of what they had taken with the promise to pay when they had the money, in spite of the fact that the supplies were supposed to have been theirs as part of the settlement scheme. In response to the demands of the American settlers, government officials in Halifax immediately authorized the use of military force to suppress the insurrection, such was the depth of suspicion with which Gaels were viewed by the British governing classes. The use of military force against the desperate Gaelic pioneers was prevented only by the blunt refusal of the militia commander in Truro to carry out his orders. He stated that he was familiar with the Highlanders and that if they were fairly treated they would cause no trouble. (MacKay 1980, 143)

The underlying English cultural links between the Americans in Pictou County and the governing elite in Nova Scotia were so strong that even the support the American settlers gave to Revolutionary forces during the American War of Independence and the contrastingly vigorous support given the Nova Scotian government by Gaelic settlers did little or nothing to challenge their privileged position in the province. Although they would constitute only a tiny minority in Pictou County, they would enjoy a hugely disproportionate representation as officials in provincial and municipal government and would ensure that the institutional infrastructure that developed locally would do so to respond specifically to their needs and aspirations. Indeed, official 19th-century educational reports give the distinct impression that the greatest aspiration of Nova Scotian educational authorities was to import the New England educational system *in toto*. Unfortunately, as discussed earlier, whether imported from New England or Britain, the strongly anglocentric philosophy that underpinned education in the province was decidedly hostile to Gaelic culture. In spite of the commanding majority Gaels would form in Pictou County, these were the realities with which they would have to contend.

The educational system developed comparatively rapidly in Pictou in concert with the county's rapid growth. Rev. Thomas McCulloch arrived from the Scottish Lowlands in 1803 and immediately set to work building up the region's educational infrastructure. McCulloch succeeded in establishing a grammar school and an academy in Pictou by 1816. This was a remarkable achievement and far ahead of the pace of educational development in the rest of Gaelic Nova Scotia. McCulloch's influence went well beyond the immediate environs of Pictou Town:

> By the late 1820's progress was evident elsewhere in the County's school system, and in 1826 Reverend MacGregor was able to state that "there are now sixty schools in Pictou district." And in the town of Pictou a subscription library had been formed in 1822. (Campbell & MacLean 1974, 53)

The Reverend MacGregor, who commented on the state of education in 1820s Pictou, above, was another extraordinary influence in the county.

> By the late 1820's the nature of this regional society in Pictou County was largely shaped under the direction of three men: Reverend MacGregor, Reverend McCulloch and Jotham Blanchard … (Campbell & MacLean 1974, 53)

Arguably Pictou's most famous cleric, Rev. James MacGregor, arrived in 1786. Unfortunately for Gaelic culture, MacGregor's evangelization of the Scots in Pictou County strongly reinforced views of the backwardness of Gaelic culture and stressed the need to become English speaking. This message was brought right into the homes of the early settlers. MacGregor was a particularly early example of the anglicizing Gaelic elite. While his intentions were good, he was a product of his times, his upbringing, and his education, none of which were well calculated to give him a very high opinion of Gaelic culture in its broadest sense. He was born and raised in Perthshire, a district straddling the Highlands and Lowlands, which had generally come under earlier and more intense anglicizing pressure than the western and northern regions of the Highlands from which Pictou would draw the bulk of its Gaelic population. Gaelic was all but gone from the Lowland section of Perthshire in the late 18th century, and due to the vast superiority of the agricultural lands in those districts where Gaelic was in decline or from which it had long since vanished, a particularly early association was made there between English and prosperity and between Gaelic and backwardness or poverty. Perthshire immigrants were noted in several areas of the Maritimes for possessing a strong belief in the backwardness of the Gaelic language, often in spite of speaking it themselves.

Whatever attitudes MacGregor may have developed toward Gaelic growing up in Perthshire, it is unlikely that they would have been improved by his education in Edinburgh or by the mission upon which he was dispatched to win back the northern and western Highlanders from their perceived spiritual ignorance. His early accounts of missionary work in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island revealed his deep dismay not only at the lack of formal education but also at the strength and richness of Gaelic cultural beliefs and practices in the communities in which he preached, which conflicted with his own religious and cultural convictions. These accounts revealed his steely determination to combat the ignorance that he believed resulted from this Gaelic cultural orientation and his desire to make Gaels behave more like their English-speaking neighbours. The depth of his conviction was perhaps best summed up in two verses from a Gaelic song he made in the 1820s, towards the end of his life, to celebrate his success among the Pictou County Gaels in this regard.

Bha na Gaidheil ro aineolach, dhall,
Bha ionnsachaidh gann 'n am measg:
Bha 'n eòlas cho tana, 's cho mall,
'S nach b' aithne dhoibh 'n call a mheas.

Nis togaidh na Gaidheil an ceann,
'S cha bhi iad am fan na's mo:
Bidh aca ard fhoghlum nan Gall
Us tuigse neo-mhall 'n a choir. (Dunn 1953, 110–112)

The Gaels were so ignorant, blind
education was scarce in their midst
their knowledge was so narrow and weak
that their loss they could not judge.

Now Gaels will raise their heads,
they will no longer be helpless;
they shall have the high learning of the English,
and powerful, virtuous understanding. (Author's translation)

This is not to suggest that MacGregor was anti-Gaelic. He was a fluent speaker of the language, a powerful preacher, and a composer of Gaelic hymns. He also hoped to see Gaelic books become available to his flock and be well used. However, his view of Gaelic culture was a rather narrow one. He did not place much value on the rich cultural store his parishioners in Pictou (and elsewhere) had brought with them to the New World. In fact, he roundly condemned many of the practices as, at best, trivial and, at worst, sinful. He also strongly associated formal education with English culture rather than seeing educational value in Gaelic cultural practice. MacGregor was a heroic figure in the religious life of the Maritimes, tirelessly trekking through the wilderness of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Cape Breton to bring spiritual teachings and support to Protestant Gaels. However, his dissatisfaction with Gaelic culture as he found it in the New World and his admiration for the English society in the area would have a profound influence, particularly in Pictou County where he was based and where his influence was deepest.

With a beloved and powerfully influential Gaelic-speaking clergyman right in their midst preaching the inferiority of their culture and the need to embrace the "high-learning of the English," an even-more powerful urban-based English minority controlling local institutions and a power structure at the provincial level that so strongly supported English culture while also promoting a deeply negative view of Gaelic, it is hardly surprising to find Gaels in Pictou County beginning to reorient their identity accordingly and from an early period. The account of Hector MacLean, a late 18th-century immigrant to Pictou County, provided by his grandson nearly 200 years later, revealed just how early Gaels had begun to accept the fictitious argument that Gaelic was inimical to progress and that economic prosperity was possible only through the adoption of the English language.

> While fluently bilingual, he was apparently convinced that all the various cultures in Nova Scotia could only be brought together by the universal adoption of the English language. His youngest son, Donald, born in 1805 was so firmly of this opinion that he refused to permit his children to speak Gaelic in the house, altho he and his wife were more fluent in Gaelic than in English. This attitude, of course, was based largely on economic reasons. This attitude has been deplored since Gaelic is probably the most ancient language in the world. The fact remains, however, that Pictou County progressed much more rapidly than sections of Nova Scotia where its use was retained longer. At the same time the best of the Highland tradition and culture has been retained. (Logan 1976, 123)

The willingness to attribute economic prosperity to success in eradicating Gaelic culture rather than to credit it to the presence of impressive natural resources was not unique to Pictou County. However, the loss of Gaelic in a county that was so fortunately blessed and so richly Gaelic did nothing to help counteract the spread of this philosophy of cultural determinism more widely throughout the Gaelic districts of the province. Pictou County was not unusual in adopting this outlook, only unusually early.

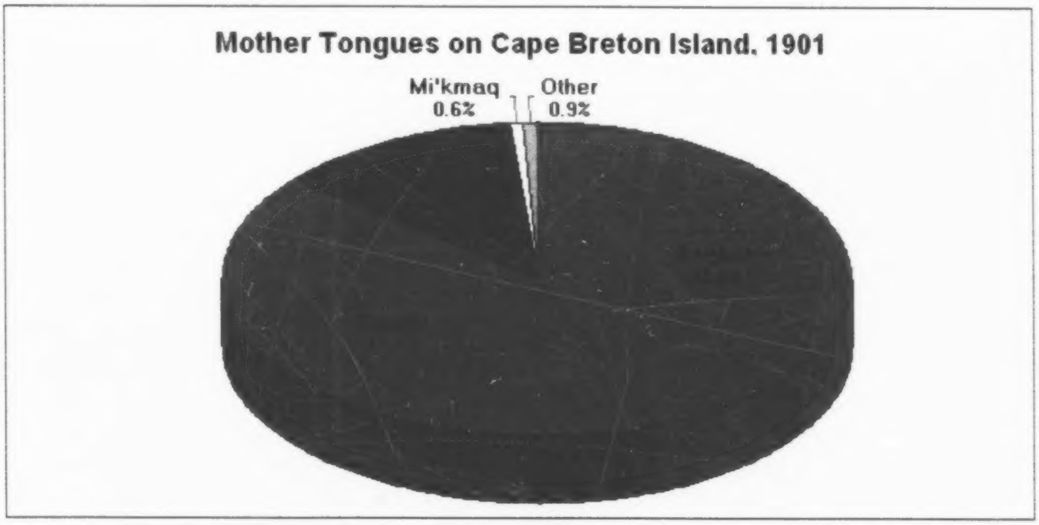
Logan's assertion that Gaelic could be dropped without sacrificing the best of Highland tradition was, similarly, a sterling example of the culturally ambiguous ground Gaels throughout the province sought to occupy once they had adopted this view of their culture's non-viability. His own tortured and failed attempt elsewhere in his book to explain the spelling of the simple Gaelic word *mac* (son) hinted at how accurate his claim was regarding the retention of the "best of the Highland tradition and culture." However, the irreconcilable arguments that Gaelic could be both abandoned and maintained was not unique to Pictou County either and met with increasing frequency in the other Gaelic districts of the province, appearing first at the top of society and in the institutions and moving out into the mainstream of the community along with increased English language usage, just as appears to have happened in Pictou County. The insidious effects of education helped disguise the full extent of the sacrifice Gaels were being forced to make in order to enjoy active participation in Nova Scotian society.

Just when Gaelic went into terminal decline in Pictou County is very difficult to determine. By the time of Confederation, English appears to have made much headway, but Gaelic was still very widely spoken, at least according to one witness, Andrew Learmouth Spedon, who chronicled life in Nova Scotia in 1862. "English is the prevailing language, but the Gaelic is universally spoken. The bag-pipe and spinning-wheel are still heard discoursing sweet music within their dwellings." (Campbell & MacLean 1974, 84) How well informed Spedon may have been regarding language use in Pictou County is open to debate, but his suggestion that Gaelic was widespread but retreating from the public to the private domain seems very plausible. This would suggest that the language went into its final stages of decline throughout the greater part of the county in the last generation of the 19th century, from 1870 to 1900. This supposition finds some support in a Gaelic parish survey conducted in 1932 by John Lorne Campbell. Several of the responses to that survey confirmed that Gaelic was once commonly heard in the various parishes of the county but not since 30 or 40 years, placing Gaelic's disappearance sometime close to the turn of the century throughout most of the rural districts of the county.

20th-Century Decline in Nova Scotia

The fate of Gaelic in Pictou had alarming implications for the language throughout the rest of the province. It seemed to indicate that urbanization and the development of a good solid institutional infrastructure were antithetical to the language's survival. To a certain extent, this was already evident in the other counties. In Antigonish, the language was much more strongly represented in the rural districts than in Antigonish town. Although Antigonish did not industrialize at all and did not urbanize on anything even remotely like the scale of neighbouring Pictou County, Antigonish town had been from the outset a Protestant and "English-speaking enclave" of Loyalist and New England merchants and tradesmen (Cameron 1996, 29). This demographic changed quite substantially through the course of the 19th century, but the cultural pattern of English cultural dominance seems to have been set at an early stage. The town's role as an important service centre increased dramatically when it was chosen as the home of the Catholic Diocese of Eastern Nova Scotia and St. Francis Xavier University. This appears to have been sufficient to keep the town's orientation resolutely English in spite of the overwhelmingly large Gaelic language constituency that surrounded it, and Gaelic decline was notably faster in the rural districts immediately surrounding the town.

The urban-rural divide was even more evident in Cape Breton. In the majority of Cape Breton's districts, Gaelic was by far the most common language. In fact, over the largest part of the island, the proportion of the population who spoke Gaelic was in excess of 75 per cent in 1901. In the most important Gaelic districts that number was probably in excess of 90 per cent. As had been noted as early as the 1860s, however, this was not the case in the growing urban district around Sydney, where Gaelic speakers accounted for far less than 25 per cent of the population in 1901. While Gaelic was still exceedingly strong geographically in Cape Breton, it was in a much weaker demographic position thanks to the growing concentration of population in the industrializing region around Sydney.

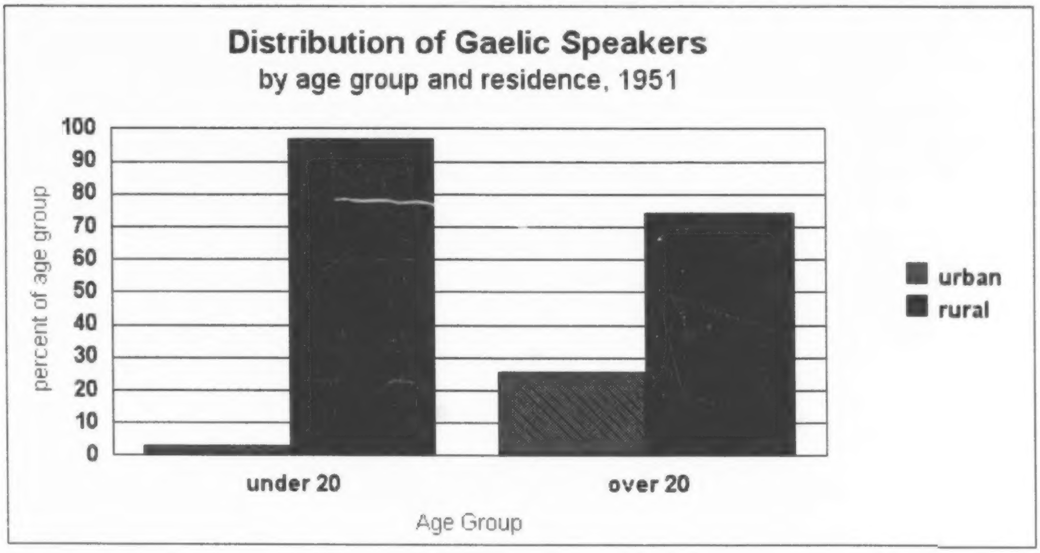


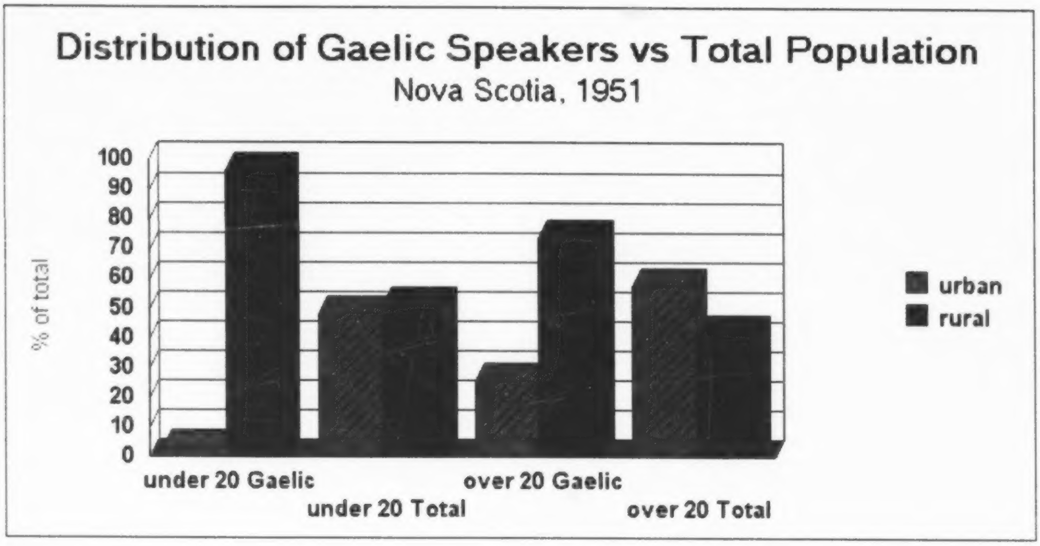
The urbanization of Cape Breton began much later than it had in Pictou — really beginning in earnest about the turn of the century. Small-scale industrialization occurred in Port Hood, Mabou Coal Mines, and Inverness, along the west coast of Inverness County, principally as a result of coal mining, and around Marble Mountain thanks to the local quarrying operation, but there was next to no follow-on development, and the urbanization phenomenon was short lived. The mines in Port Hood and Mabou Coal Mines were abandoned in the early part of the century, virtually without leaving a trace of their existence, and other small-scale manufactories similarly disappeared. Marble Mountain also declined without any significant urbanization. The larger mines in Inverness fuelled more substantial urbanization, but even here the growth was not sustained, as the industry was in serious decline by the 1930s. Inverness failed to diversify as an urban centre and remained too small to have much cultural influence on surrounding rural districts. Southern and central Inverness County remained strongly rural and Gaelic speaking.

Serious, long-term urbanization in Cape Breton occurred only in the Sydney area, where coal mining and steel making caused spectacular growth. In 1891, Sydney was still a small town with a population about the same as that of the parish of Judique, in Inverness County, or Whycocomagh, but by the beginning of the century its population had already tripled. The boom that followed was sufficiently strong and sustained to cause a large shift in the population from the formerly heavily populated rural districts of Cape Breton into this rapidly growing industrial centre. The implications for Gaelic, as in Pictou, would not be good.

The principal problem in the industrial or urban areas was not so much a lack of Gaelic speakers, since the number of people moving in from strongly Gaelic-speaking rural districts was substantial. Large, vigorous, and reasonably concentrated Gaelic-speaking communities were established in various urban areas in Nova Scotia, such as New Waterford, Glace Bay, Inverness, and even in the north end of Halifax after World War II. Sen. Allan J. MacEachen recalled that in the immediate post-boom Inverness of his youth in the 1930s, the *majority* of households appeared to be Gaelic speaking (Interview: February 2001). Instead, the more serious problem seems to have been that the urban environment proved particularly hostile to the socialization of children in Gaelic. The Gaelic language and Gaelic traditions were much less likely to be passed on from one generation to the next in urban areas than they were in rural districts.

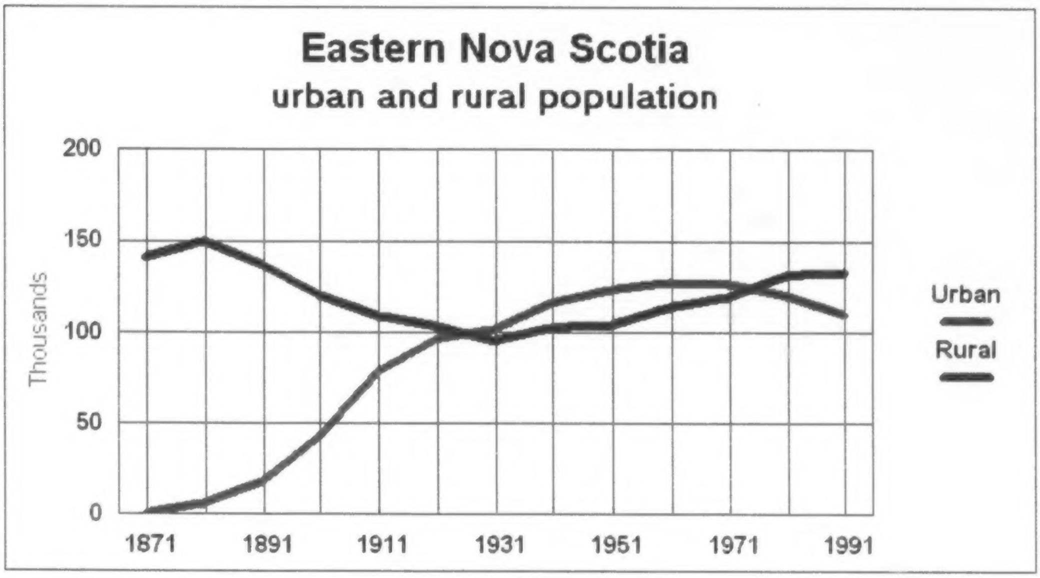
While the undermining role of the institutional infrastructure of Nova Scotia has already been discussed, there are any number of other reasons why so few Gaelic-speaking children were to be found in urban districts with otherwise substantial Gaelic-speaking minorities. Exogamous marriages or the playground influence in communities where English was a more commonly encountered language and almost certainly the most practical *lingua franca* undoubtedly played a part. However, considering the proportion of the population that was Scottish and Gaelic speaking, the degree of the failure to pass on Gaelic to children in urban areas was still notable. An assessment of the 1951 census brings the issue into focus. Of the adult population of Gaelic speakers, a small but substantial 27 per cent lived in urban Cape Breton. This was a disproportionately small representation compared to the rural versus urban distribution of the population as a whole, but positively massive compared to the number of Gaelic-speaking children in urban districts, which was a mere three per cent. Fully 97 per cent of the children being raised in Gaelic in Cape Breton were being raised in rural communities.



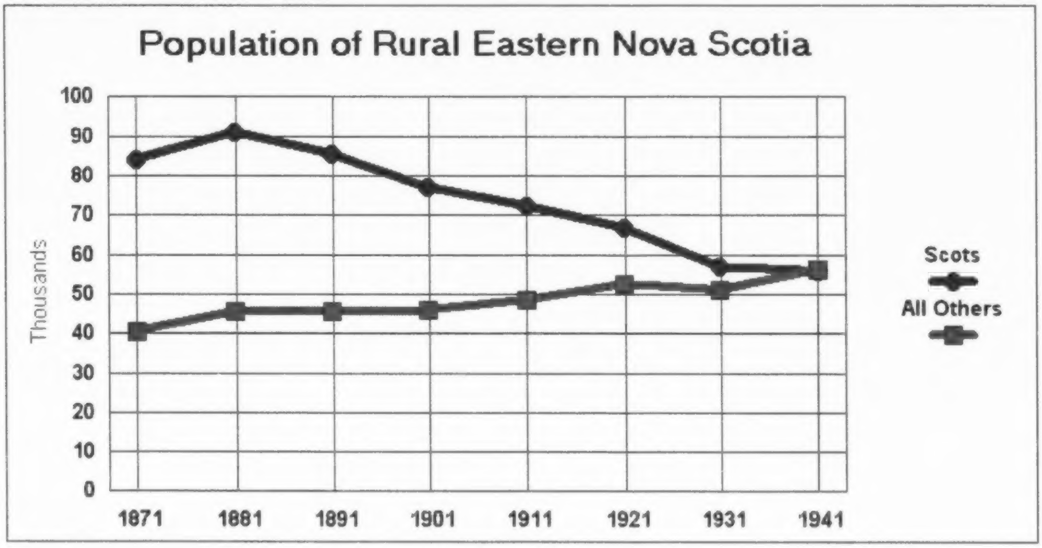


The Rural Base

If Gaelic was going to survive in Nova Scotia, clearly it depended on a strong, stable rural community. Sadly, rural Nova Scotia was in serious decline even by the turn of the century. From 1881, when the Scottish population (and probably the Gaelic language) had just passed its peak, the proportion of the population living in rural communities in eastern Nova Scotia fell rapidly and continued to fall for half a century. By the late 1920s, the rural population of eastern Nova Scotia dipped below that of the urban population for the first time ever and continued to decline until 1931 when a slow recovery began.



This half-century of rural erosion would have posed a significant threat to the language on its own, but the problem was even more serious than was apparent on the surface. To a very large extent, rural decline in eastern Nova Scotia was Gaelic decline. When broken down by ethnic group, the migration demographic suggests a disintegrating Scottish community rather than a collapsing rural community. From 1881 to 1901 out-migration was heavy enough to result in zero growth in the combined non-Scottish rural districts but not actual decline. After that 20-year period of crisis, the population in those districts resumed a slow increase. In the Scottish districts, by contrast, out-migration was a virtual hemorrhage and the population declined markedly and steadily from 1881 onward. In 50 years, the rural Gaelic community lost nearly 40 per cent of its population.



The Continuing Struggle for Institutional Representation

A serious economic downturn in the late 19th century has been advanced as the most obvious reason for out-migration from the Maritimes at that period, but it was clearly uneven in its effects. Economic pressure appeared to galvanize the Acadians who struggled with many of the same handicaps as their Gaelic neighbours. Although there was some dissension, ethnicity was seized upon as an important resource for community development by Acadians, and the need to access institutions in their own language was identified as an important goal. The Acadian elite argued that out-migration was damaging to the community as a whole, and they largely succeeded in stemming the flood.

The same economic pressure, by contrast, seemed to shatter the Gaelic community. The Gaelic elite could not make the same call for ethnic solidarity as their Acadian counterparts, since they had, in effect, been promoting mobility and assimilation — the very factors that were now threatening their community with depopulation. They had also helped to entrench attitudes that would make any attempts to infuse institutions with a meaningful Gaelic presence extremely difficult. In short, they may have inadvertently made their community more vulnerable to decline than it had previously been by unraveling some of the important cultural strands that held it together, most notably the strongly unifying force of language and culture, and by actually reducing the demands made on public institutions to be responsive to local needs, such as operating in the local language. As one social and economic study of Gaelic in Nova Scotia noted:

> In its institutional life, the crux of the problem for Gaelic is that it must deal on its territory with organizations whose aspirations, ideologies and priorities are derived from and imitate cultures outside the Gàidhealtachd, and do not necessarily include an active interest in the future of Gaelic. Historically, this is due in large part to the British Empire's deliberate prevention of Gaelic culture developing its own "institutional" structures that would have allowed more ready adaptation to social and economic change. ("Community Initiatives for Gaelic Language and Cultural Development in Nova Scotia: Options for The 1990s", Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia: 8)

While Acadians began to combine the idea of culture and economy in the early 1880s, and continued to fight hard for institutional representation for the French language, it would not be until nearly 40 years later that Scottish Gaels in Nova Scotia would see a similar coalescence in their own communities and then less strongly. The driving force behind this movement was the Scottish Catholic Society and, more specifically, Rev. Donald MacAdam.

MacAdam's Gaelic credentials were as impeccable as his commitment to Gaelic culture was strong. He hailed from East Bay, a vigorous Gaelic-speaking community in eastern Cape Breton, which had been founded by Prince Edward Islanders in the early 19th century. These people had been early pioneers in higher education, and East Bay College, which appears to have ceased operations in 1828, was preceded only by Pictou Academy as a centre of higher learning in eastern Nova Scotia. As a son of that parish, MacAdam demonstrated a strong interest in his native culture and in education. While a young priest at St. Francis Xavier University he succeeded in winning Gaelic its first tenuous foothold in higher education in Nova Scotia in 1891, when he founded a Gaelic Society and offered the first-ever class in Gaelic language and literature at the university. That he did so in a less-than-welcoming intellectual environment was evident from the announcement that appeared in the *Casket* heralding the new class.

> The more loyal sons of the heather are just now jubilant over the fact that they have succeeded, despite the strong classic atmosphere of St. F. X. in getting a class of their own beloved Gaelic started and that as a consequence they are able to inhale pure Celtic air three times a week. (Cameron 1996, 89)

St. Francis Xavier University still succeeded in being the first Canadian university to place Gaelic in the curriculum. This preceded the introduction of Celtic language courses by Harvard (1896) and the Catholic University of Washington (1895). (Information courtesy of Dr. Ken Nilsen)

MacAdam's early efforts to promote Gaelic at St. Francis Xavier University were later renewed by his older contemporary, Rev. Jimmy Tompkins, who went on to become a driving force in the field of adult education and the co-operative approach to economic development, where the two men's interests once again intersected in the 1920s. As vice-president of the university, Tompkins made serious efforts to advance the interests of non-English speaking cultural groups. He founded the French chair in 1921 and also succeeded in the considerably more modest goal of keeping a tenuous Gaelic presence in the university (in response to lobbying from the Gaelic community) by hiring the retired Presbyterian minister Rev. Alexander MacLean Sinclair, grandson of Nova Scotia's most celebrated Gaelic poet, John MacLean of Glen Bard, Pictou County.

Regrettably, MacLean Sinclair's presence at St. Francis Xavier University was all too tenuous. He taught only one semester a year at St. Francis Xavier University between the period 1908–1912 (Cameron 1996, 166) and at Dalhousie during the same period and possibly as late as 1914 at the latter institution (Sinclair 1950, 259). Faculty rigidly set the students' overall course of study at St. Francis Xavier University, and little accommodation was allowed for this additional class. The number of students who could afford the time to attend, therefore, was generally small. There was little or no support for the procurement of texts or for the development of a coherent program of study. Indeed, MacLean Sinclair was himself untrained in Celtic studies but had been a keen amateur scholar throughout his distinguished career as a minister in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Continually frustrated by a lack of time and resources with which to pursue his Gaelic research and publishing endeavours during those years, MacLean Sinclair nonetheless became one of the legendary figures in Gaelic scholarship and certainly one of the most significant men of Gaelic letters in North American history. Had the university established a chair of Gaelic Studies with MacLean Sinclair at the helm, particularly when he was a younger and more vigorous man, the contribution to Gaelic scholarship and culture would have been incalculable.

That did not happen and Gaelic disappeared from the university curriculum again following Alexander MacLean Sinclair's departure in 1912. The university did recognize his contribution to Gaelic, however, with the granting of an honorary doctorate at a later date. During the war years (1914-1918) the college's programs were greatly reduced. Gaelic remained in the college calendar but was not offered. It did not surface again until 1919, seven years after MacLean-Sinclair's departure, when the announcement of the proposed French chair stung Gaels sufficiently to spur a flurry of reactionary activity. A new round of lobbying began, led by the Antigonish Highland Society, for a Gaelic chair. The university did show some interest when a priest offered $2,000 towards the endowment, provided a further $1,000 could be raised. This was a pretty modest sum of money compared to the $50,000 devoted to the French chair, but even it pushed the university's good will too far. Instead, a Gaelic class was re-established in 1919 with the Antigonish Highland Society contributing $100 towards its maintenance the following year. Gaelic reappeared in the Antigonish *Casket*, and the first Gaelic article appeared in the *Xaverian* in 1921. One contributor to the *Xaverian* even went so far as to attack the low status that the Gaelic language and culture were forced to endure at St. Francis Xavier University making the telling point that courses in Gaelic and Celtic history would have been of much greater value to Scottish students than "much of the useless Greek history and mythology" that students had been compelled to take. (Cameron 1996, 166).

Despite what must have been a disheartening cycle of waxing and waning support for Gaelic at the university in the early decades of the 20th century, Reverend MacAdam, who had left St. Francis Xavier University to take up pastoral duties in Cape Breton, had not given up on the language (or the university). On the first day of July 1919 he set out to promote Gaelic's interests independently by founding the Scottish Catholic Society. The society was composed of individuals who were concerned about the decline of rural life, the more oppressive side of life in Nova Scotia's booming industrial towns, and the advancement of Gaelic culture. More than half of the original 73 founders were professional people (bishops, university presidents, professors, judges, lawyers, priests, and the like); and only 28 per cent were of the managerial or proprietary classes (merchants, customs agents, station masters, etc.) and only 18 per cent were drawn from the ranks of farmers, fishermen, labourers and tradesmen. (MacInnes 1977-78, 29)

The society seemed to represent a faction of the Gaelic elite dissatisfied with the lack of responsiveness on the part of institutions to the plight of the wider community. The society had a strong philosophy of egalitarianism, believing, among other things, that universities should not be devoted solely to the interests of elite education but should play a stronger role in the education and advancement of the community as whole. As the name would imply, the society was also committed to Catholic ideals and as such was an immediate failure as a mechanism for uniting the Gaels of Nova Scotia in common cause, since a considerable part of the Gaelic community adhered to the Protestant faith. In spite of its sincere attempts to win benefits for all Gaels and all rural Nova Scotians, it remained a largely Catholic endeavour and had much less impact on Protestant Gaelic-speaking communities. This limitation aside, it remained one of the few organizations that worked at all effectively and consistently during the early 20th century to promote the language in Nova Scotia.

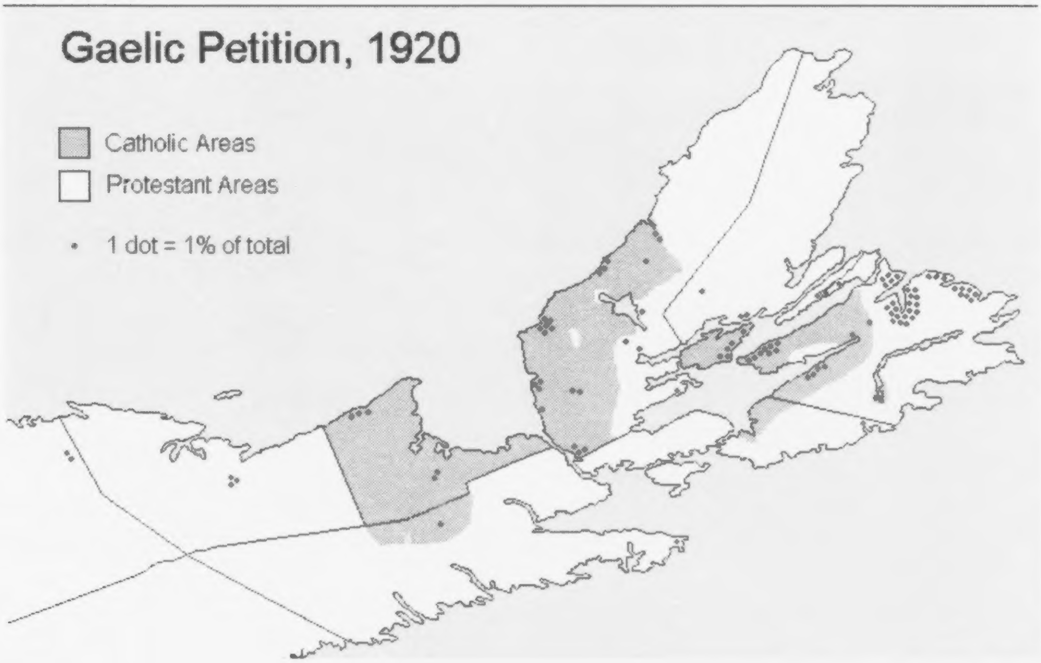
The Scottish Catholic Society founded cells in Sydney Mines, Glace Bay, New Waterford, Sydney, Iona, Christmas Island, Boisdale, East Bay, Grand Mira, Big Pond, Johnstown, Bay St. Lawrence, Margaree Harbour, South West Margaree, Broad Cove, Port Hood, Judique, Creignish, Glencoe, Glendale, Port Hawkesbury, St. Andrew's, St. Joseph's, Arisaig, Lismore, Lakevale, Giant's Lake, and New Aberdeen. These cells were designed to promote discussion on social and economic development, and to further that end, the society began publishing a bilingual periodical, *Mosgladh* (Awakening), to help pass on information and to encourage discussion about issues of interest to rural Eastern Nova Scotia.

One area to which the society paid special attention was education, and it began lobbying hard right from its inception to have Gaelic included in the Nova Scotian curriculum. Perhaps to its own surprise it met with early success. In 1920 a petition was sent to the

Nova Scotia legislature by M. MacLeod of Sydney requesting that Gaelic be included in the Nova Scotian curriculum.

> In view, therefore of the large percentage of our population who speak Gaelic, and whose dearest traditions and loftiest aspirations are embodied in that language; in view of its undoubted educational value, the excellence of its literature, and its great practical utility, our petitioners urge, respectfully but strongly, that Gaelic be included in the courses of study for both the Common and High School Grades of our Public Schools and receive at least the same prominence that is accorded the French language. (RG 5 Series P; Vol. 79, # 8)

The 1920 petition was signed by 5,468 individuals from more than 230 communities throughout eastern Nova Scotia, ranging from industrial Cape Breton to industrial Pictou County and beyond, into the rural Gaelic districts of Colchester County. It even included a few signatures from Halifax, Wolfville, Boston, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan. About 85 per cent of the petitioners were from Cape Breton and 15 per cent from the mainland. Roughly 43 per cent of the petitioners were from rural Catholic communities, 33 per cent from industrial Cape Breton, 11 per cent from rural Protestant communities, five per cent from small urban centres, five per cent from unidentified rural districts, and three per cent from industrial Pictou County. The petition was an impressive feat of organization, especially in light of the demoralizing state of the rural economy and of Gaelic culture, and it was reasonably successful in soliciting support from all of the Gaelic districts of the province. However, as Elizabeth Mertz noted in her 1982 linguistic



study of Cape Breton, the petition provoked "vocal opposition" even within Cape Breton communities, suggesting that any arguments that challenged the emerging mythology of Gaelic's impracticality could provoke strong and emotional reactions (Mertz 1982, 204).

Opposition aside, the immediate result of the petition was surprisingly positive. In 1921, the Nova Scotia Legislature approved Gaelic as an optional subject in the curriculum of Nova Scotia. For the first time since the free public school system was instituted in the 1860s, Gaelic could be offered as a subject of study in Nova Scotian schools — provided a qualified teacher could be found. That small proviso, however, appears to have been sufficient to stop the movement dead in its tracks. No teacher in Nova Scotia had ever been educated in Gaelic, let alone trained to teach it to others. No books on Gaelic grammar or phonetics were available in the school system, no teaching aids, and not so much as a Gaelic dictionary. Neither did there appear to be much enthusiasm for changing that situation within the Department of Education. In this respect, Gaels in Nova Scotia were following the example of Gaels in Scotland a generation earlier, who, having won concessions for Gaelic at the highest levels of the educational system, saw the concessions rendered useless by the apathy of school boards dominated by an anglocentric elite.

The Scottish Catholic Society pressed ahead, despite the apparent setback. It assembled an education committee and secured the services of *MacTalla* editor Jonathan G. MacKinnon to provide night courses in Gaelic. The fact that MacKinnon was a devout Presbyterian from Stewartdale and the classes were open to both Catholics and Protestants was testament to the society's desire to be ecumenical in the provision of benefits for its Gaelic constituency. The society paid MacKinnon's fee and agreed to supply texts while they lobbied Mayor Fitzgerald and the Sydney school board for funds and class space. In 1923 and 1924 a "Gaelic School" with three teachers and three classes (adults, preschoolers, and a grammar class, in which Gaelic was studied in the manner of the classics) was held in the Sydney Lyceum, sponsored wholly by the Scottish Catholic Society. In 1926, it was moved to Sydney Academy Annex. The society also sponsored Gaelic night classes in Sydney Mines, New Waterford, Glace Bay, Boisdale, Christmas Island and Iona. (MacEachern 1983, 9–11)

In spite of these efforts, not much success was met in introducing the language into the regular course of study in Nova Scotian schools. The benign apathy of the provincial Department of Education in the face of increasingly ambivalent attitudes in the Gaelic community of the province as a whole was enough to ensure that very little happened, in spite of Gaelic's new status. The idea that Gaelic was an obstacle best abandoned was one that had long since permeated the educational framework of the province, and in spite of the new status Gaelic had been granted in Halifax, the people who were charged with the practical task of introducing it into the teaching program in eastern Nova Scotia — local school boards, school principals (who were often monoglot English speakers from outside the community), and teachers, both those who were from outside the Gaelic speaking districts and even local Gaelic-speaking teachers themselves — all showed little enthusiasm. Elizabeth Mertz concluded that in Mabou, one of the language's strongholds in Nova Scotia, no school made *any* formal use of Gaelic, from 1900 to 1930, despite the language's newly won status. At that time, Gaelic was still so strong in the community that English-speaking children were actually assimilated by their Gaelic-speaking classmates during schoolyard activities, but within the English-only classroom bilingual children were prevented by their teachers from even so much as translating for their monolingual Gaelic-speaking schoolmates.

How children were discouraged from using Gaelic in schools depended very much upon the individual teacher. There was no prescribed policy. Instances of corporal punishment have been noted, but the more common technique appears to have been social humiliation. One Gaelic speaker remembered how, when he first attended school during this era, his teacher angrily informed the Gaelic-speaking children that they were not speaking a real language but merely a type of gibberish. (Dunn 1953, 141) In some districts, Gaelic children caught speaking the language were required by their teachers to wear a shingle around their neck (the equivalent of a dunce cap) and could remove the sign of their stupidity only by catching someone else speaking Gaelic. In some schools, children who had transgressed the no-Gaelic rule were assembled at the end of the day and administered corporal punishment for their misbehavior. More often than not, the embarrassment of wearing the badge of shame was considered a sufficient deterrent, as can be judged by the testimony of Joe Kennedy of Inverside who related that Gaelic-speaking children in the area of Inverness during this period were known by the term of contempt "the shingles" by their English-speaking schoolmates (Information courtesy of Jim Watson). The school system's success in associating Gaelic with stupidity, socially undesirable behavior, fear, tattling, physical punishment, embarrassment, and a whole host of other negatives created another significant obstacle for those attempting to promote a greater use of the language in the school system. It is likely no coincidence that the students who came through the school system during this period are credited for actively discouraging the use of Gaelic in their own homes from the 1930s on.

As a result of these increasingly negative attitudes, the Scottish Catholic Society's attempts to fire a desire for Gaelic in the schools were not especially successful in the 1920s; but their efforts were by no means a complete failure. Some of their areas of strongest activity, notably the Christmas Island–Iona district, remain among the most active and best organized in promoting the culture today. Moreover, their approach to cultural development was a holistic one and sought to encourage independence and dignity in rural and urban life as well as a strengthened attachment to Gaelic culture. Much of their effort to encourage adult education anticipated the Antigonish Movement. Indeed, the Antigonish Movement built on the very cells in rural Cape Breton that the Scottish Catholic Society had formed. Moreover, the driving force behind the Antigonish Movement, Moses Coady, spoke of the need for the movement to be friendly to the Gaelic language and culture, although his contention that "through credit unions, co-operative stores, lobster factories and sawmills, we are laying the foundation for an appreciation of Shakespeare and grand opera" (Coady 1939, 68), suggests that even he did not fully grasp the richness or potential of the culture with which he advocated friendship.

In spite of such blind spots, co-op coordinators found innovative ways of using the language to communicate the movement's ideals to a community not particularly well educated in the English language. One such creative endeavour was the use of Gaelic drama, and some of the Gaelic plays performed during this period may still be perused in the Beaton Institute Archives in Sydney. Gaelic, at least, was used in positive, proactive ways that benefited the wider community. For Gaelic itself, though, the gains were small and the losses were great.

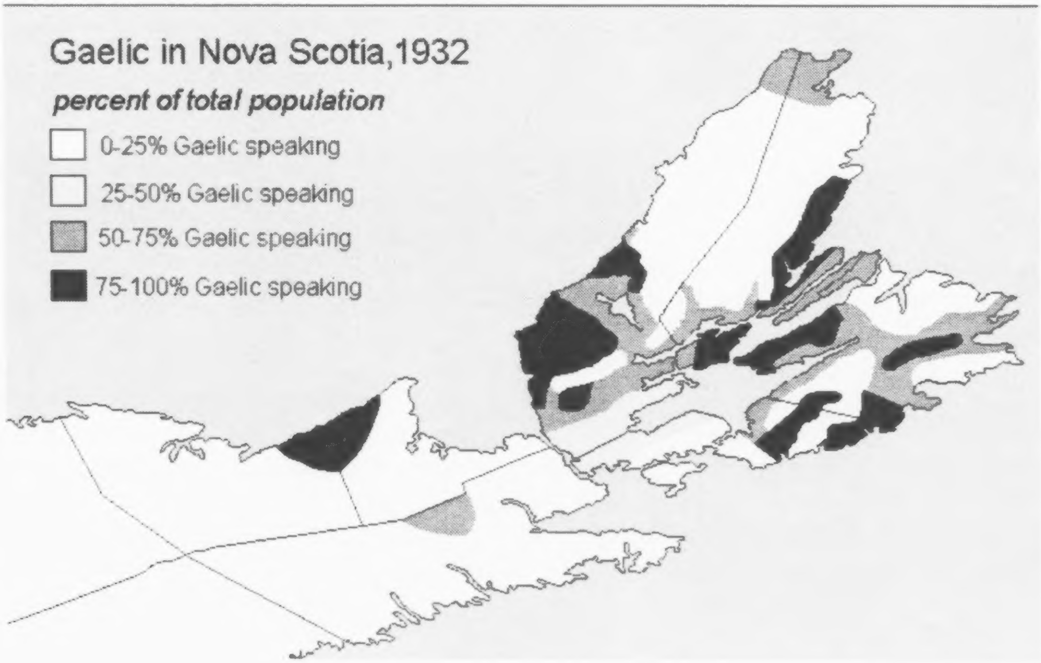
A New Era: The 1930s

The 1930s were a decade of continuing contradictions for the Gaelic community. Rural eastern Nova Scotia had been in decline for half a century, and the rural population was, for the first time, smaller than the urban. Yet, in the face of the great depression, there was a slowing of that decline and the population began to grow once again. The co-operative movement raised hopes for working people throughout eastern Nova Scotia and promised improved economic returns for rural dwellers, but within a generation, the small mixed subsistence family farm, which had been the backbone of that existence, was on the way out, replaced by increasingly mechanized, increasingly specialized, and increasingly large commercial farms. The rural stronghold of Gaelic was set to evolve relatively quickly in the next generation and in ways not well calculated to help the language's fortunes. At the same time, Gaelic finally began to find a stable institutional presence in Nova Scotia, but just as the last great Gaelic-speaking rural districts appeared to give up on the language.

A fairly clear picture of the state of Gaelic in the 1930s can be drawn from both anecdotal and statistical evidence. The most important statistical data was provided by a young Gaelic scholar from Scotland by the name of John Lorne Campbell who conducted a parish-by-parish survey of the Gaelic language in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island in 1932. He sent questionnaires to ministers and priests throughout eastern Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island asking them to estimate the number of people using Gaelic in their parishes; whether younger people spoke the language; whether it was being corrupted by the use of English loan words and idiom; whether church services were available in Gaelic; and whether any Gaelic reading material was used in the community. He was remarkably successful in eliciting helpful responses and managed impressively wide coverage. The sarcastic response provided by one minister from the town of Pictou, however, that there was no Gaelic there to be *corrupted* by a "great language like English" revealed that not everybody was particularly enthusiastic about developing an accurate profile of Nova Scotia's Gaelic heritage (Campbell 1932, 81). Undoubtedly, in places where such attitudes prevailed, Gaelic speakers were even more reluctant than usual to use their language in a public setting. That caution aside, Campbell's survey accorded very well with the general picture provided by 20th-century Canadian census returns and with other anecdotal evidence from the period.

Campbell's survey revealed a continuing, steady erosion of Gaelic but also pockets of considerable strength. The number of Gaelic speakers in the province had fallen to approximately 25,000 according to the 1931 Canadian census, and the percentage of the population who could speak the language was in similar decline. Campbell's work revealed just how dramatically the language had fallen off in mainland districts. Gaelic speakers formed a majority of the population only in discrete pockets such as Giant's Lake in Guysborough County and along the coastline from Arisaig in Antigonish County to the Lismore–Bailey's Brook area in Pictou County. With the exception of a small but stubborn survival in the River John–Earltown area, Gaelic was the language of only a few scattered and mostly quite elderly people throughout the rest of Pictou County.

According to Campbell's results, Gaelic was still a majority language over most of Cape Breton, but where a generation before it had been spoken by more than 75 per cent of the population in these rural districts, it was now spoken by 50 per cent or better, with only a few core areas in which the language retained its former strength. Western Inverness County had the largest strong community, with a deep solid zone from Judique to Mabou reporting greater than 75 per cent Gaelic language use and smaller pockets within that district and in neighbouring areas such as Broad Cove and Glendale reporting greater than 90 per cent usage. Baddeck and the North Shore district in Northern Victoria County reported returns of 80 per cent–90 per cent. A zone running from the Iona peninsula through Christmas Island to Boisdale in Victoria and Cape Breton counties reported 80 per cent–100 per cent. Marion Bridge in Cape Breton County reported over 90 per cent, and Fourchu, Loch Lomond, Grand River, and Framboise, straddling Cape Breton and Richmond counties, constituted another large but sparsely populated district with 80 per cent–90 per cent Gaelic usage. In most of these core districts the number of people who could understand the language was rated at close to 100 per cent


Gaelic in Nova Scotia,1932
percent of total population
☐ 0-25% Gaelic speaking
☐ 25-50% Gaelic speaking
▨ 50-75% Gaelic speaking
■ 75-100% Gaelic speaking

The shrinking size of these strongly Gaelic-speaking zones was an ominous sign, but what was more worrisome was the fact that even in these core Gaelic-speaking districts, children were no longer being raised speaking the language in the home. Campbell's returns suggested that by 1932 many of the Gaelic-speaking areas outside the core districts had very low Gaelic use among the young. Extensive interviews conducted by linguistic scholar Elizabeth Mertz in Mabou and the North Shore in the early 1980s suggested that it was at just the time that Campbell was conducting his census that parents in the remaining stronghold core Gaelic communities decided to *actively* prevent the children there from learning Gaelic by refusing to use it in the homes after many decades of apparently stable community bilingualism. From the 1930s onward, the Gaelic population was not only shrinking in Nova Scotia, it was beginning to age.

A More Welcoming Institutional Environment: The 1930s

It is a particular irony that in this period of flagging Gaelic confidence one of the great political figures of Nova Scotian history emerged from the Gaelic community's own ranks and that, in part due to his influence, institutional barriers to Gaelic began to weaken. In 1933, Angus L. MacDonald was elected premier and began a long career as one of Nova Scotia's leading politicians. He was a native of Dunvegan, in the parish of Broad Cove, Inverness County, one of the last remaining strongholds of Gaelic tradition in the province — an area estimated as being over 90 per cent Gaelic speaking by the parish priest in Campbell's 1932 survey. MacDonald's ascendancy to the office of premier inspired local bard Angus Y. MacLellan to make the song "An Sgiobair Ùr" (The New Skipper) in his honour.

Although raised in an area rich in such Gaelic tradition, Angus L.'s family reflected the strains of the time. His older brother, Rev. Stanley MacDonald was a noted, self-taught Gaelic scholar and was literate in the language, while his younger sister, Sr. St. Veronica, a history professor who worked behind the scenes to encourage Gaelic at St. Francis Xavier University, was not raised speaking the language and had to learn what she could through her own initiative. Although his approach to his Scottish heritage has been criticized in some quarters for its strong streak of undeniable romanticism, Angus L. was also well schooled in Gaelic tradition thanks both to his upbringing in a strongly Gaelic community and to the formal training he received in Gaelic at St. Francis Xavier University under Rev. Alexander MacLean Sinclair.

Angus L. was a Gaelic-speaker, but although he had some formal training in the language at university, he did not appear comfortable reading or writing Gaelic. In this respect, however, he did not differ from the vast majority of the leading Gaelic tradition-bearers of the period, particularly in Catholic districts. Mrs. Agnes Kennedy, who managed the federal constituency office of her father, Senator "Little Danny" MacLennan, during Angus L.'s tenure as provincial premier and federal minister of national defense (naval affairs), remembered that the two men always used Gaelic when discussing official political business (Interview, 2000). This and other anecdotal evidence suggest that Angus L.'s oral command of the language was reasonably adept. As premier, he played an important role in creating a more welcoming institutional environment for Gaelic in Nova Scotia than it had ever enjoyed before.

The first to take advantage of the change of the guard in Nova Scotian politics were the Scottish Catholic Society and James MacNeil, the Gaelic editor of the *Sydney Post Record*. MacNeil had long been a vociferous advocate of Gaelic and had been haranguing the school system and the media for years for better of provision of Gaelic. In the late 1930s, the combined efforts of these advocates began to draw considerable and largely favourable attention once again. An article in the Antigonish *Casket* in December 1938 strongly supported the campaigners and decried the "one language theory" that had dominated the Nova Scotian school system for so long (Mertz 1982, 204). While this in itself represented a significant philosophical break from the past, it did not appear to translate into any appreciable activity in Antigonish County.

In industrial Cape Breton, by contrast, rhetoric was supported with action. In 1938 Gaelic was a recognized subject in Sydney Academy with an enrolment of 50 students. (*Minutes and Reports of the Cape Breton County Council*, January 1938, 14) Gaelic advocates appeared to have learned a hard lesson following the success of the 1920 movement in getting Gaelic admitted to the curriculum and its equally notable failure in finding any qualified teachers to actually teach it. The Cape Breton County Council made the following resolutions early in 1938:

> Now Therefore Be It Resolved that the legislature be urged to provide for the maintenance of a Gaelic teacher in connection with the Normal School at Truro; and thus enable students preparing for the teaching profession to acquire a knowledge of Gaelic for the purpose of teaching it in the schools.
>
> Also that Gaelic be prescribed on the curriculum of the evening schools for adults.
>
> And Be It Further Resolved that the legislature be urged to provide for the maintenance of a Gaelic Summer School at some convenient point in the Province for at least two weeks during the summer vacation to enable teachers who are now engaged in the teaching profession to study the Gaelic language.
>
> And Be It Further Resolved that the legislature be urged to see that some person with a competent knowledge of the Gaelic language be appointed on the Board of Education to carry out the provision of these regulations and lastly, that pupils who take up the study of Gaelic in the schools be allowed equal merit as in French in their exams. (*Minutes and Reports of the Cape Breton County Council*, January 1938, 15)

With Angus L. MacDonald at the helm, the Nova Scotia Assembly proved more responsive than it had ever been to the plight of Gaelic. According to Elizabeth Mertz, the assembly called for the enactment of measures to ensure the teaching of Gaelic in Nova Scotian schools and adopted James MacNeil's Gaelic grammar book as the provincial text (Mertz 1982, 205). The assembly passed a resolution calling for the appointment of a Gaelic teacher at the Normal School, Truro, in 1939, so that teachers could be suitably trained in the language. In the summer of 1939, the first six-week Gaelic course at the Provincial Summer School for Teachers at Dalhousie was instituted (Sinclair 1950, 259). Perhaps most surprisingly of all, independently of the public school system, a Gaelic college was established at St. Ann's. Talks were also initiated on creating a replica Highland Village somewhere in Nova Scotia, complete with a museum devoted to the Scot in North America and a Gaelic cultural resource centre.

What might have come out of this promising activity had World War II not broken out, is difficult to guess. It was perhaps prophetic that the only official action that immediately followed was the banning of Gaelic in telecommunications by the Canadian government as a wartime security measure. The move to introduce Gaelic into the public schools of Nova Scotia did not spread widely. In fact, it had next to no impact on the rural districts that were the language's principal heartland. Attitudes towards Gaelic in its areas of strength appeared more ambivalent than they had ever been.

Harvard scholar Charles Dunn, who conducted extensive fieldwork in Cape Breton in the early 1940s, noted considerable self-consciousness around the use of the language, particularly among the young.

> A young man at a dance in one of the Cape Breton towns might very easily be insulted if anyone addressed him in Gaelic, no matter how frequently he might speak it at home. Since their language is the speech of a minority, the members of that minority have come to feel (as so often happens in North America) that it is inferior to the language used by the majority around them (Dunn 1953, 141).

Moreover, even where taught, Gaelic was not to be introduced to students in their early schooling where it could conceivably result in functional bilingualism but was to be offered only as a second language in the same manner as French or the dead classical languages.

The nascent Gaelic institutional presence in the 1930s appears to have been substantially derailed by the outbreak of hostilities with Germany in 1939, and there is little evidence of activity until nearly a decade later.

The Post War Era: Maj. C. I. N. MacLeod

In the late 1940s there was still considerable potential for Gaelic to take a meaningful place in the Nova Scotian educational system, but underachievement continued to be the watchword for Gaelic in the educational sphere. The president of Acadia University, Dr. Watson Kirkconnell, had sufficiently good Gaelic to publish an excellent translation of one of Nova Scotia's most famous pieces of Gaelic poetry, *A Choille Ghruamach* (The Gloomy Forest), in the *Dalhousie Review* in 1948, and a "Keltic Society" was active at his institution under the direction of Dr. MacGregor Fraser about this time, but no evidence has been found that Gaelic was offered as a course of study at the university (Sinclair 1950, 259).

The situation was similar at St. Francis Xavier University. In 1948, the *Xaverian* welcomed the return of the Gaelic Club: "The reorganization of such a society, fills a long felt need on the Xaverian campus where a great percentage of the students and faculty were of Scottish lineage." (Cameron 1996, 282) Rev. Dr. P. J. Nicholson, president of the university, was a fluent Gaelic speaker, a former pupil of Rev. Alexander MacLean Sinclair's and a noted Gaelic scholar with a command of Gaelic genealogy keen enough to unnerve his Highland students at times, as he rattled off several generations of their ancestors upon a first meeting. Yet his students also remember that he was torn between a belief that Gaelic was of little or no practical use in the modern world, on the one hand, and this deep and sincere attachment to the language and culture, on the other. Such a fundamental and painful tension appears to have been a common burden for the declining Gaelic elite, and as a result, Rev. Dr. Nicholson continued with his personal Gaelic scholarship, maintained links with Gaelic scholars in Canada and Scotland, found time in his exceedingly busy schedule to write a Gaelic column in the Antigonish *Casket*, helped establish a good collection of Gaelic books in the library, and flirted with the idea of establishing a Gaelic Folklore Archive at the university, but at the end of his ten year term as president, Gaelic still had no formal status or role at the university.

The initial move to promote Gaelic in the post war era would not come from St. Francis Xavier University but from the public school system — if partly by accident. In 1949, Maj. C. I. N. MacLeod was hired as Gaelic lecturer at St Ann's Gaelic College in Cape Breton, a private institution founded ten years earlier. MacLeod was a fluent Gaelic speaker from Ross-shire in the Scottish Highlands and was trained in Celtic Studies, having attended university in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Although he does not appear to have had much knowledge of Gaelic history, culture, and tradition in Nova Scotia, particularly, he was very well educated in Celtic studies generally. He was the first educator in the province with an advanced degree in Gaelic and was well qualified to take on the challenge of teaching Gaelic studies at the Gaelic College. The only problem was that there was no actual program of Gaelic studies at the Gaelic College when he arrived. As a result, MacLeod very quickly parted company with that institution, accepting a newly created position as Gaelic advisor to the provincial Department of Education in 1950.

As Gaelic advisor to a Department of Education that had no Gaelic program, C. I. N. MacLeod's role was not altogether clear. Doubtless more research will help clarify what was going on in the school system with regard to Gaelic at this time, but MacLeod's role seems to have been to help train teachers, to help establish some means of adult education, and to help introduce Gaelic as a more or less extracurricular activity at the public school level. MacLeod produced a long-playing record with an accompanying booklet entitled, *Simplified Gaelic for Beginners*, as well as a book of his own Gaelic poetry entitled, *An t-Eilthireach (The Exile)*.

From 1950 to 1955, the Department of Education offered credit courses in Gaelic at Dalhousie University, taught by Donald MacLean Sinclair, son of Rev. Alexander

MacLean Sinclair (Mertz 1982, 208), and also by C. I. N. MacLeod, who seems to have been charged with overall responsibility for the program. In all, 53 teachers received credits in Gaelic during this period (MacKinnon 1964, 63), but far from producing 53 teachers ready to fluently teach Gaelic in the school system, the program merely gave a basic introduction for most of the teachers involved. The course ran for only a few weeks each summer and was far from sufficient to produce fully competent Gaelic-speaking teachers when most were not already fluent or at least functional speakers of the language. That they were not at this level upon receiving their accreditation was evident from MacLeod's own papers and has been substantiated by Sr. Margaret MacDonell PhD, one of the very few fluent Gaelic speakers to participate in the program (Interview: February 2001). In his 1951 report, for example, MacLeod reported that he had 14 teachers enrolled for the Nova Scotia Summer School: eight were from Inverness County, four from Cape Breton County, one from Richmond County, and one from Victoria County. Six were noted as having enough Gaelic to *possibly* attend the advanced class, and eight were destined for the beginners class. (MacLeod to Col. D. C. Sinclair, 28 May 1951) While a potentially good start, the program was discontinued in 1955 before producing a strong core of Gaelic teachers and was never reinstituted.

For the most part, MacLeod acted as a promoter and a facilitator, trying to disseminate information about the language and culture and helping schools in Scottish districts introduce Gaelic as an extracurricular "arts" course for students and, in some instances, for adults. The mechanism for doing this was not altogether clear, but in 1950 MacLeod reported grant-aided classes in Gaelic and Gaelic singing in Sydney under the local tuition of Mae Cameron (singing) and John Campbell (Gaelic). These were sponsored by the Scottish Catholic Society (MacLeod to Col. D. C. Sinclair, 29 May 1950). Similar grant-aided classes were offered in Iona under the direction of Hugh F. MacKenzie, a renowned bard, piper, and fiddler from the area, and sponsored, in part, by the local Home and School Association.

MacLeod was particularly taken by a three-act Gaelic play put on by the students at Iona Federated High School hall that spring. He was also favourably impressed with classes in other parts of the island and mentioned attending "closing exercises of these classes in S. W. Margaree, Dunvegan, Christmas Island, Sydney and Gabarus Lake," and being "well satisfied with the progress made in each school section." (MacLeod to Col. D. C. Sinclair, 29 May 1950). Evening classes in Sydney Academy were sponsored by the Caledonia Society of Cape Breton in 1950 and taught by Major MacLeod himself. He also noted Gaelic festivals organized by schools in Iona, Baddeck, and Antigonish that year and expressed his hope that similar festivals would be instituted in all the schools in Scottish communities. "With the co-operation of Inspector George Lent and Mr. A. MacDonald, Principal, Judique Consolidated High School, prospects for the establishment of Gaelic and Highland Dancing classes in the Judique area in the fall are promising." (MacLeod to Col. D. C. Sinclair, 29 May 1950)

In his 1951 Annual Report, MacLeod noted continuing efforts to establish and maintain grant-aided adult classes in Gaelic, Gaelic-singing, and piping. He specifically mentioned classes in Gaelic language at Christmas Island under Hugh F. MacKenzie and at Gabarus

Lake under P. D. MacDonald. Courses in Gaelic singing were offered at Giant's Lake in Guysborough County by June MacGregor, a teacher at the Lakedale school, and classes in piping were offered in Antigonish under Pipe Major J. MacMillan of Reserve Mines, Cape Breton, at St. Francis Xavier University under Andrew F. Braid of Clydeside, Scotland, and in Dartmouth under A. W. Sutherland of Earltown (a protégé of Catherine Baillie of Inverness, Scotland).

The adult education program does not appear to have been as far reaching as the public schools program, but it is not always easy to separate references in the documentation to adult education from references to programs for youth, since they both appear to have taken place largely outside the normal domain of the schools. MacLeod noted an adult short course in Lismore, Pictou County, which ran for two hours a night for three nights in September of 1950. During that course, a Gaelic development program for East Pictou–West Antigonish was discussed but nothing further appears to have come of this. (MacLeod to Col. D. C. Sinclair, 11 September 1950) Sometime around this period, he also noted a successful summer school in piping, highland dancing, and Scottish history, with 35 taking dancing and nine piping; 25–30 attended the evening historical and cultural lectures during which a request was put forward for Gaelic instruction for the following year's summer school. Cumulatively, fairly large numbers of people were taking part in these extracurricular activities. "Approximately five hundred students participated in Evening Classes in either Gaelic, Piping or Highland Dancing throughout the period under review. Locations for such classes extended from Inverness County to Cumberland County. From a linguistic point of view, the Christmas Island–Benacadie development continues to be outstanding, particularly in the Gaelic dramatic sphere." (MacLeod to Col. D. C. Sinclair; c.1950)

While a considerable amount of activity seemed to be taking place, the effects do not appear to have been particularly deep or long lasting. Gaelic clearly had no real status in the schools, and the teaching of Gaelic arts was heavily dependent on what appears to have been very limited outside funding and informal instruction by untrained instructors, some of whom do not appear even to have been salaried teachers in the school system. There was also disconcertingly frequent evidence of the promotion of imported modern Scottish cultural arts in favour of the more traditional Nova Scotian variety.

After a promising start, the numbers attending the provincial Gaelic Summer School for teachers at Dalhousie dwindled to seven, possibly reflecting a growing realization that the course was unsuitable for raising non-Gaelic speakers to a functional level and that, in any case, there were no jobs for Gaelic-speaking teachers awaiting successful graduates. The course was discontinued in 1955. According to one scholar, Gaelic was then offered at schools in Mabou, West Mabou, Hillsborough, St. Rose, and Stewartdale, all in Inverness County, and in St. Peter's in Richmond County (MacKinnon 1964). It is possible that it was offered in a few others, such as Christmas Island, Iona, and Sydney Academy, but no record has been found for these later districts. The courses were more or less extracurricular and amounted to approximately one hour a week of instruction — hardly enough even to acquaint students with the language, let alone have any of them actually learn to speak it. (Kelly 1980; MacKinnon, 1964)

In 1958, MacLeod left the Department of Education. The post of Gaelic advisor was immediately discontinued, and in 1964, Gaelic was once again dropped from the Nova Scotia curriculum.

A Formal Recognition of Gaelic in Post-Secondary Education

When Gaelic finally succeeded in breaking the post-secondary educational barrier to become a recognized course of studies at the university level, it is hardly surprising that it should happen at St. Francis Xavier University. From its establishment in 1853, St. Francis Xavier University had been the pre-eminent institution in Gaelic Nova Scotia and no other institution in Canada had a comparable record in Celtic Studies. Native Gaels (usually, but not always, Catholic clergy), who were not only fluent speakers of the language but often steeped in Gaelic tradition as well, predominated as faculty and administrators. Many of them were well aware of the field of Celtic Studies and were in touch with leading Celtic scholars throughout the world. They also encouraged meeting scholars and facilitated them in their research into Nova Scotia Gaelic. Some of the more prominent of these were, Fr. Donald M. MacAdam (1891–c.1900), Fr. Ronald Beaton (1903–1909), Rev. Dr. Hugh MacPherson (President, 1906–1936), Rev. Alexander MacLean Sinclair (1908–1912), A. T. MacDonald (1919–1920), Rev. Dr. Patrick J. Nicholson (President, 1944–54), Rev. Dr. Hugh "Little Doc Hugh" MacPherson (1923–37), Rev. Dr. Malcolm MacEachern (1937–51), Rev. Dr. Malcolm MacLellan (President, 1964–70), Rev. Dr. Malcolm MacDonell (President, 1971–78) and Sr. Margaret MacDonell, PhD (1977–86) (Cameron; Correspondence, Prof. Ken Nilsen, St. Francis Xavier University.).

Some of these clergy-faculty rose to the office of president, and in addition to their knowledge of Gaelic literature and history, at least three of these were also traditional fiddlers. So, while the administrative attitude toward Gaelic at St. Francis Xavier University had often been indifferent, and while the language had struggled to keep a foothold as an academic subject, there had often been a quite strongly Gaelic social or cultural milieu at the university. It is difficult to think of any other institution anywhere in the world where there was such a strong collection of Scottish Gaelic professionals and playing such an important institutional role. Many of these people not only worked behind the scenes to promote Gaelic but also taught courses in the language in addition to their regular teaching duties. However, the formal anglocentric education in Gaelic communities had been undermining confidence in the language and culture for generations; the depth of self-assurance and commitment to the language and the proactive attitude one might find among the Acadian elite was decidedly weaker among professional Gaels — a point evident even at St. Francis Xavier University.

Amidst the Gaelic cross-currents, the various support mechanisms nearly coalesced to found a chair of Celtic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University in the early 1950s. Premier Angus L. MacDonald appeared to have instigated the idea of a chair, possibly at the urging of his sister, Sr. St. Veronica who became a professor of history at St. Francis Xavier University in 1937 and worked in the background to promote a stronger Gaelic presence, but there was an unusual twist. Sir James Dunn, president of Algoma Steel, instituted the Dr. Alexander Johnston Foundation at St. Francis Xavier University to promote the arts, and particularly Celtic culture, in memory of Alexander Johnston, Dunn's long-time friend and a St. Francis Xavier University alumnus. His company donated $10,000 a year to the university for the next 25 years toward that end (Cameron 1996, 518–19). Dunn also approached Angus L. MacDonald with an offer to resign his premiership and fill a chair of Celtic studies, which Dunn would fund. It was in some ways a fantastic offer. Considering Gaelic's low status (the number of Gaelic speakers had fallen by half since the war, to less than 7,000), the prospect of the most powerful (and popular) political figure in Nova Scotia leaving the post of premier to become a professor of Gaelic studies was incredible. It was also taken entirely seriously by all involved. Rev. Dr. John Hugh Somers, who became president of St. Francis Xavier University in 1954, invited the premier to fill the chair, an invitation that was accepted and would apparently have been carried through, had Angus L. not passed away that same year.

With the death of one of Nova Scotia's most popular premiers, Gaelic lost a good and strong friend. In the short term, that meant it had to do with far less than a Chair of Gaelic or Celtic studies at St. Francis Xavier University — specifically, a $5,000 fund that Angus L. had managed to secure from the MacDonald Tobacco Company to encourage student research into the early history of the Scots in Nova Scotia and, as an example of his romantic streak, the naming of the main reading room at the new library, "The Great Hall of the Clans," in recognition of the university's Gaelic heritage.

This was pretty thin soup compared to what had been in the offing, but Angus L.'s strong support for the language and culture appeared to push the Gaelic agenda forward in more substantial ways. In 1957, there were rumors afloat that Dalhousie University, which had paid very little attention to its own much more distant Scottish roots, was interested in developing a Gaelic studies program after its involvement in the Department of Education's Gaelic Summer Course. That, and the $10,000 a year windfall from Sir James Dunn to promote Gaelic studies, seems to have been the catalyst that finally spurred St. Francis Xavier University into decisive action. Major C. I. N. MacLeod was recruited from his post as Gaelic advisor to the provincial Department of Education and hired as the first full-time lecturer in Gaelic and Celtic studies at the university in 1958. He was named associate professor of Celtic studies and taught Gaelic language, as well as courses in Celtic history and literature. Rev. Dr. Somers believed that such a course of studies would be popular (several hundred students attended the first courses) and explained why St. Francis Xavier University should undertake the initiative:

> St F. X. is more indebted, probably than any university in Canada, to the Celts and especially to those who come from the Highlands of Scotland. This university was founded by a great Highlander and through the years its leadership and support have come to a great degree from the Scottish people. (Cameron 1996, 322)

The Multicultural Era: New Initiatives, Old Problems

It was typical of Gaelic's yo-yo like existence in the Nova Scotian educational system and of the extremely poor coordination between the various levels of education in the province, that at the very time that it became a recognized and available course of study in the post-secondary educational system, with hundreds of students attending Major C. I. N. MacLeod's courses, it vanished from the public school system once again. MacLeod was professor of Celtic studies at St. Francis Xavier University from 1958 until his sudden death in 1977. However, by 1955 Gaelic training was no longer available for Nova Scotian teachers and the small number of schools offering the one-hour-a-week Gaelic program appear to have dwindled away to none by about the time MacLeod assumed his professorship at St. Francis Xavier University. Gaelic was dropped from the public school curriculum altogether in 1964. While this hardly spoke of any great institutional enthusiasm for Gaelic in Nova Scotia, events were unfolding at a national level that would help change the culture's fortunes.

In the 1960s, multiculturalism began to gather force in Canada. In part, this reflected the excitement surrounding Canada's hugely successful World's Fair in Montreal — Expo '67 — and its theme "Man and His World," which celebrated cultural diversity. It was also strongly motivated by Quebec's "Quiet Revolution" and that province's attempts to shrug off the cultural and political straitjacket that had bound the province's French majority. With the election of the young, charismatic, fluently bilingual Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1968, the multiculturalism agenda was given real force at the national level. In 1969 the Official Languages Act was passed, meaning that the provision of government services in the French language would now become more proactive across the country. In 1971, the Trudeau government laid out a new multiculturalism policy for the nation. Nova Scotia's Gaelic community was fortunate in having an informed, influential and sympathetic ally right in the inner circle of federal power at that period, in the person of Allan J. MacEachen.

A Gaelic speaker raised in Inverness County and a former student and faculty member at St. Francis Xavier University, MacEachen had an intimate knowledge of Gaelic in its important rural and institutional settings in Nova Scotia and was well acquainted with the obstacles it faced. As the federal secretary of state and, later, as deputy prime minister, he was able not only to develop policy that was friendly to multicultural ideals — and by extension directly to Gaelic — but also to facilitate access to the various cultural support programs that were available for those interested in promoting Gaelic and other cultures in Nova Scotia. His support in Ottawa not only helped Gaelic struggle its way back into the public school system but also resulted in the funding of the Gaelic Folklore Project and the establishment of a chair of Gaelic studies at St. Francis Xavier University.

The Battle for Gaelic in the Public Schools

In 1968, Sr. Margaret Beaton of Mabou and Hugh F. MacKenzie of Grand Narrows gave non-credit Gaelic classes at Xavier College, which had been established as a college of St. Francis Xavier University in Sydney in 1951 and would later become the University

College of Cape Breton. The college's founding director, Rev. Dr. Malcolm MacLellan of Glenville, Inverness County, was a fluent Gaelic speaker and remained at the helm of the College until he left to become president of St. Francis Xavier in 1970. Out of the Xavier College Gaelic classes emerged *Comunn Ghàidhlig Cheap Breatunn* (The Gaelic Society of Cape Breton) in industrial Cape Breton.

Hugh F. MacKenzie was a noted Gaelic poet and musician and had long been active in providing Gaelic tuition in the Iona–Christmas Island district. Sister Beaton had been appointed by St. Francis Xavier to act as librarian at Xavier College in 1955. There she helped build a remarkable holding of Gaelic books, manuscripts, and recorded material that became the basis for the Beaton Institute Archive (named posthumously in her honour) at the University College of Cape Breton. With the assistance of John Campbell, the editor of the Sydney newspaper the *Cape Breton Highlander*, they rallied Gaelic interests in industrial Cape Breton and established Gaelic Society chapters in parts of rural Cape Breton, most notably in Margaree and Boisdale. In many ways, they were a more ecumenical reincarnation of the Scottish Catholic Society and, like the society, devoted considerable effort to solving the problem of Gaelic education, continuing to offer private Gaelic classes while lobbying the provincial government to have the language reinstated in the provincial curriculum.

The Gaelic Society was well organized and was given a serious hearing by Allan Sullivan, the minister of education. In 1969 Gaelic was once again given credit status in the public school system. However, the society faced typical problems. The first was the failure of the Gaelic teacher-training program of the 1950s to produce a cadre of qualified teachers. In response to this, the society came up with the resources to dispatch one of its members, journalist Linden MacIntyre (currently host of CBC's, *The Fifth Estate*) to Scotland on a recruiting mission for qualified Gaelic-speaking teachers. It also attempted to reinstitute a local training program for Gaelic-speaking teachers. Towards that end, John A. (Jake) MacDonald of Jordan Hill College of Education in Glasgow and his colleague D. R. MacDonald were brought to Sydney to give short courses in the language over several summers in the early 1970s. The Gaelic Society attempted to keep the courses going themselves with local instruction during the winters when the two educators returned to Scotland. In 1976, Jake MacDonald was teaching about 20 adult students in Sydney. (*Cape Breton Highlander*, Sydney 4 August 1975: 5)

The local teaching initiative appeared to suffer from the usual problem, however: not enough time and resources to properly train beginners and semi-speakers. Three of the four teachers who eventually taught Gaelic in Cape Breton came from MacDonald's class at Jordan Hill College in Scotland and were all native Gaelic speakers — Margie (MacDonald) Beaton of Eriskay; Effie (MacCorquodale) Rankin of North Uist; and Murdina Stewart of the Isle of Skye. The late Maureen (Rankin) MacKenzie of Mabou was the only local teacher involved and does not appear to have taken the Cape Breton course. Two of the teachers, Margie MacDonald and Effie MacCorquodale, married local men after coming to Cape Breton and raised their families in Mabou, while, interestingly enough, Maureen Rankin of Cape Breton married Ronald MacKenzie, a Gaelic speaker from South Uist who then emigrated to Mabou where they raised their family. Murdina Stewart eventually returned to the Isle of Skye when the program was cut back.

Having worked out a solution to the problem of providing a core of qualified teachers, the society also had to deal with the problem of paying them, as no money or staff was allocated by the Department of Education to implement Gaelic as a course of study in the provincial school system. With the assistance of Allan J. MacEachen, then secretary of state, that problem was circumvented with a temporary federal grant, which initially allowed for two teaching positions in Cape Breton. It is claimed that Victoria County Council was initially offered one of the Gaelic teaching positions but for unknown reasons declined. As a result, Inverness County received both positions and became the focus of Gaelic educational efforts for most of the next generation. (Joint Committee for Gaelic in the Schools 1981–82; MG 6, 69 Beaton Archives)

In 1972–73, six schools in Inverness County were selected for the pilot program of Gaelic studies. In addition, the provincial adult education program was then sponsoring roughly 20 Gaelic classes throughout Cape Breton. (CGCB 3) Gaelic was eventually offered in seven schools — Mabou, Judique, Port Hood, Inverness, Whycocomagh, South West Margaree, and North East Margaree — with teachers traveling from school to school as necessary. As had been the case in the past, however, the integration of Gaelic into the institutional framework of the province was exceedingly weak.

In 1970 the Department of Education had permitted an extension of the Gaelic option from the elementary to the junior and senior high levels (NS Teacher's Union Newsletter Vol. 9 no. 1; Kelly, p. 75), but the only requirements for the institution of such a class were that a minimum of 15 students attend and a Gaelic-speaking teacher be available. Any fewer students would require that other arrangements be made, which would be sure "... not to interfere with the regular time-table of the school" (*The Teacher* 1 Sep 1970; Kelly, 1980: 76). Furthermore, teachers needed no qualifications other than an ability to speak Gaelic in order to teach the Gaelic program, and the only teaching materials available consisted of one text — Calum MacLeod's *Simplified Gaelic Lessons for Beginners*, produced in the 1950s. Prospective Gaelic teachers were required to provide their own materials. The amount of class time students had was also far from sufficient to produce Gaelic speakers but did at least give some children in Gaelic communities a positive exposure to their ancestral language. That small investment produced quite significant results, inspiring recording artists such as the Rankin Family from Mabou and the Rankin Sisters from Mabou Coal Mines through early exposure to the Gaelic song tradition, which was still current in the area but becoming increasingly difficult to access.

Probably the most significant problem with the new Gaelic initiative was that no specific funding had been made available, and so Gaelic teachers were engaged for one-year contracts, which were renewed over a 10-year period. Such uncertainty made forward planning next to impossible. When the special federal grant ceased at the end of that period, the Department of Education and the local school board had still not integrated the Gaelic program into the regular school system. The Gaelic program was kept afloat for a time only by appeals to the Department of Education Assistance Committee (Joint Committee for Gaelic in the Schools 1981–82; MG 6, 69 Beaton Archives).

Upon completion of the Gaelic pilot project, which ran in seven Inverness County schools from 1972-77, Gaelic was granted the same status as all other subjects on the Nova Scotia school curriculum. This meant that any school, which so desired, could offer Gaelic and that remains the case today. However, only the Inverness County School Board took advantage of the opportunity to offer the course in its family of schools. In fact, the decision whether to offer Gaelic or not was left to individual school principals who had to allocate budgets and teaching assignments (Correspondence, Margie Beaton). In 1980, the Commission on Education Finance essentially recommended a return to the 1956 Foundation Program, which leveled courses to a core offering across the province, with municipalities providing any extra money needed to support courses above and beyond the "core" provision (Joint Committee for Gaelic in the Schools 1981-82; MG 6, 69 Beaton Archives). This put considerable pressure on courses such as Gaelic, and the program of studies in Inverness County began to crack under the strain.

In 1982, with the exception of Mabou, all other programs in Inverness County were discontinued, and the former Gaelic teachers were switched to other subjects (Joint Committee for Gaelic in the Schools 1981-82; MG 6, 69 Beaton Archives). Although there were four Gaelic-speaking teachers in Mabou, most were employed to teach other subjects, and the Gaelic program there was cut back and then eventually dropped in 1991. It was ironic that Gaelic should once again disappear from public school education at the same time that St. Francis Xavier University was increasing its capacity to deliver post-secondary Gaelic education with the addition of a second full-time lecturer in 1993.

Even more ironically, Gaelic was dropped from the Nova Scotia public school curriculum at the very time that the province was developing important initiatives to improve the representation of Nova Scotia's minority cultures in the school system. In 1995, Bill 39 made provision for francophones generally, for Acadians, for African-Canadians, and for Mi'kmaq within the provincial school system, but no mention was made of Gaels or of the Gaelic language. When Dal MacIntyre of *Comhairle na Gàidhlig, Alba Nuadh* (The Nova Scotia Gaelic Council) made a presentation to the Nova Scotia Legislature asking that Gaels also be given the same opportunity to learn about their language, history, and culture in Nova Scotia schools, the Minister of Education expressed sympathy but felt that the problems of "systemic racism" that the act sought to address did not in any way apply to the Gaelic situation, and so no special provision would be made to include Gaelic in any way in the Nova Scotian curriculum.

To pile irony upon irony, not only was the Minister of Education's own father one of the many *monolingually* Gaelic-speaking children who had been forced into English-only schools to receive his education, but one of the minister's own employees had been reprimanded for using Gaelic in the school in which she worked at the very time that the new more culturally sensitive education policy was being implemented.

> To practice her Gaelic, Dianne Grant writes Gaelic notes on her work calendar to remind herself of upcoming events, tasks and meetings. It's one of the only ways she can put to daily use the Gaelic she learned while enrolled [sic] in Celtic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish. It is a practice her supervisor wants stopped. Dianne works in a school library in Northern Nova Scotia. During a meeting with her supervisor and principals at the school, her supervisor complained that Dianne wrote notes to herself in Gaelic. "She stated that she wanted me not to use Gaelic at work. Not that I speak Gaelic, there's no one to speak Gaelic with. The extent of my use of Gaelic is doodles on a blotter pad and memos on the calendar. I felt small." (*Am Bràighe*, Winter 1995–96)

Gaelic and Gaelic Cultural Studies: A New Era?

In spite of the loss of Gaelic from the public school system and the same tired old political rhetoric that justified its exclusion from the newly proposed cultural studies programs, there were some promising signs that the Gaelic program that had formerly been in place, along with other developments, had begun to undo some of the negative associations that generations of linguistic repression had wrought. From 1993–98, Gaelic was offered after school hours as a fully credited extracurricular course in Mabou, taught on a volunteer basis by Margie Beaton. In spite of having to compete with other extracurricular activities such as sports, it proved popular enough to attract more than triple the number of students than were taking several of the classes offered within the regular school program during regular school hours. Older Gaelic speakers also voiced support for the reanimation of the Gaelic program and wrote letters to that effect to government, while the Nova Scotia Gaelic Council continued to put pressure on the Nova Scotia Legislature to justify its decision to exclude Gaelic from recognition in Bill 39.

The opportunity to receive Gaelic language instruction in Nova Scotia's schools has existed continuously on the Public Schools' Program since the completion of the Gaelic pilot program which ran from 1972-77 in seven schools in Inverness County. At the end of the piloting period, Gaelic was granted the same status as all other subjects on the Nova Scotia School curriculum. In effect, this meant that any school in Nova Scotia could opt to offer Gaelic courses. There were no restrictions and today that is still the case.

Unfortunately, the Inverness District School Board was the only School Board to offer the program throughout the seventies and eighties. This does not mean that is was not a struggle to maintain the program. It had to compete with other subjects for its place on the timetable. Like all subjects, if there was no demand, then it simply would not be offered!

The Gaelic program almost met its demise with changes in the funding formula to schools in the early eighties. With much pressure from organizations such as the Mabou Gaelic and Historical Society, Gaelic was included in the new Foundation Document for Education in Nova Scotia of the early eighties.

As result of changes in funding, by 1983, only one school in Nova Scotia continued to offer Gaelic, namely Mabou Consolidated School. Prior to that time, Gaelic had been offered in four to seven schools in Inverness County. Over the years, the decision to offer Gaelic in the schools was left entirely to the administrators of the schools and such is the case today.

The Inverness District School Board and later the Strait Regional School Board and Strait District School Boards are all to be given credit for supporting the Gaelic Program in Inverness County. Recognition should also be given to the Mabou Gaelic and Historical Society which served as a "watchdog" for Gaelic over the years and often pressured the school administration and School Board to maintain the program in Mabou. Possibly, without this pressure, Gaelic would have totally disappeared from Inverness County's Schools twenty years ago. However Mabou can claim that Gaelic has been taught in the community's school for twenty eight of the last thirty years.

In recent years, the Nova Scotia Gaelic Language Council has played a very important role in supporting Gaelic Language Education and in the development of the new Gaelic Cultural Studies 11 course. Through further lobbying, that course, now called Gaelic Studies, has been given the same status as African Studies, Mi'kmaq Studies and Acadian Studies as an option for the new compulsory Canadian History 11 course.

It is to be noted that without vigilance on the part of Nova Scotia's Gaels, many opportunities for Gaelic would slip by as the Establishment does not always recognize the value of Gaelic until it is reminded.

At present, Gaelic language instruction in offered in three Inverness County Schools: Dalbrae Academy in Mabou (opened 2000) which offers a full three year high school credit program in Gaelic language, and Gaelic Studies 11 (also offered on-line) feeder schools for Dalbrae Academy, Whycocomagh and Bayview Education Centres offer a language program for grades 4–8. Inverness Academy offers Gaelic Studies. Several schools in Cape Breton and Victoria Counties also offer Gaelic Studies and Gaelic language programs e.g. Rankin Memorial in Iona and Sydney Academy.

In the late 1990s these efforts began to produce results. With a new round of school consolidation being mooted, Gaelic cultural studies was drafted in as a potentially important rationale for Dalbrae Academy, the proposed new regional high school in Mabou. In preparation, the Strait Regional School Board strongly supported the idea that Gaelic be reintroduced into the course of study in Mabou (Interview: Margie Beaton, April 2001). In 1998, the large after-school Gaelic language class was reincorporated into the regular curriculum, and for the first time in more than twenty years money was provided for the procurement of texts. At the same time, work was begun on the development of a Gaelic cultural studies program to match similar programs already developed for Acadian, African, and Mi'kmaw culture.

Unfortunately, although Gaelic Cultural Studies did come on line in four high schools in Cape Breton in 1999 (Mabou, Inverness, Iona, and Sydney) the development of the

Gaelic cultural studies curriculum had actually been terminated prior to completion when it (and other courses) became budget-cutting casualties. Teachers are very conscious of the fact that the curriculum they are currently using is still somewhat vague in its direction, and as a result that there is little consistency between the courses offered at the various schools. With no authoritative text (the case with many courses), teachers needed to devote considerable time to gathering appropriate resources, something that became increasingly difficult to do as general budgets were tightened. Teachers are keen to improve the course but can only work informally and on their own time at present. Considering the lack of academic research that has been done in Gaelic history and culture, particularly in Nova Scotia, and the concomitant lack of good, readily available material, the development of such a curriculum would be a daunting task even for a trained historian or cultural scholar with good resources at his or her disposal.

Resources available in the community, other than tradition bearers, are limited. The Cape Breton Regional library in Sydney has compiled a surprisingly diverse collection of Gaelic books and has created a very useful catalogue of the Gaelic books available in its collection and at University College of Cape Breton. An expanded version of this for the province would be very helpful for teachers and for Gaelic learners outside the school system. The community of Judique has also begun putting together Gaelic resources in its community hall, predominantly in the form of a sound archive. Approximately 250 tapes, mostly of traditional fiddling but also with background interviews, have been lodged at the hall as the basis of the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre. The centre has begun collecting Gaelic books and has compiled a register of Gaelic speakers in the community. Unfortunately, Judique no longer has a school. Putting together local resources in this way would be not only a valuable supplement to school holdings and existing programs but would also be a useful resource to many small communities in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Materials of this nature could be gathered and organized in schools or, as Judique has done, in community centres. This would help make up for the shortfall of materials available in the public school system and relieve teachers of some of the responsibility for tracking materials down for classroom use.

Another problem — a very old one in Gaelic education — is the simple lack of training for Gaelic teachers in Nova Scotia. In 1998, after negotiations with the Department of Celtic Studies, the Department of Education at St. Francis Xavier University agreed to include Gaelic as one of the "teachable" subjects at the elementary school level and as one of the "diverse cultures" courses at the secondary level. In 2000, Dawn MacDonald-Gillis, who is presently in a 40 per cent Gaelic cultural studies position at Rankin Memorial School in Iona, became the first student to graduate from a Canadian education program with Gaelic as a teachable subject. Since this report was originally written, the Gaelic cultural studies position held by Dawn MacDonald-Gillis at Rankin Memorial School has been increased from 40 per cent to 100 per cent. The Department of Education indicated that if more positions in the school system were to come available, they would "seriously consider hiring an individual to devise a Gaelic Methods course." (Correspondence: Catriona Parsons, Dept. of Celtic Studies, St. F. X., 26 March 2001) Until that occurs, the quality of Gaelic instruction in the schools must rely to a very large extent on the native Gaelic skills of teachers rather than on any professional training.

By taking advantage of these existing skills, Gaelic language instruction has been reintroduced into Dalbrae Academy in Mabou in grades 10 and 11, and it is hoped that by next year an integrated program will be in place for grades 9–12. Bernard Cameron has been hired in a term position to provide itinerant Gaelic language instruction for grades 5–8 in Dalbrae's feeder schools, travelling between Port Hood and Whycocomagh. He indicated that the students show a terrific desire for the language and have been doing very well but also expressed considerable frustration over the fact that he can see them only twice in every six-day cycle and, at that, for only half an hour each class. In effect, students are getting the same one-hour a week exposure to Gaelic that was attempted without great success 50 years ago. In addition, he has no dedicated classroom and so cannot make use of any visual aids or other materials that cannot be carried from school to school. That said, some 365 students are getting at least some positive exposure to Gaelic in their schools each week.

Bernard Cameron also teaches grade 11 Gaelic cultural studies through the Distributive Education Program (distance education) out of Dalbrae Academy and is working on a similar web-based program for grade 10 Gaelic language instruction. This language program, which starts with the assumption of no knowledge of Gaelic, should be available to anyone within the Strait Regional School Board family of schools by next year, and there is talk of expanding the program province wide in the near future and possibly to a national level. (Interview: Bernard Cameron, March 2001) The design of the program has already attracted the attention of County Cork in Ireland, which is interested in making similar use of the Internet to provide Irish Gaelic courses to a wide audience. (Interview: Margie Beaton, March 2001) Since this report was originally written, the Gaelic language program has increased in Inverness County. Gaelic is offered for grades 4–8 in Dalbrae's feeder schools in Whycocomagh and Bay View Academy, Port Hood, and a full 3-year high school credit program is now available at Dalbrae in Mabou.

These initiatives in Nova Scotia's schools are coinciding with seemingly increased interest and activity in the private sector elsewhere. In the spring of 1999, for example, the Department of Celtic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University, in response to a plea from the Nova Scotia Gaelic Council to prepare more secondary bilingual instructors of Gaelic on the community level, hosted a conference/training day designed to give pointers in teaching technique to such instructors. One of the goals of such workshops is to set standards for such instruction so that official recognition can be given by the council in all Gaelic language courses throughout the province (Parsons: 2001). In another interesting development, Cape Breton parents in Fort MacMurray, Alberta, have made successful use of that province's more liberal language education legislation in order to begin Gaelic courses for their children at Father Mercredi High School. They will undoubtedly be following the Nova Scotian educational initiatives closely (Interview: Dave MacKenzie, Fort MacMurray, February 2001).

While the new initiatives in the Nova Scotian schools have been welcomed locally, there is a certain "once bitten, twice shy" cynicism in the Gaelic community concerning the depth of institutional commitment to Gaelic in the schools. As an example of how shallow Gaelic's penetration of the institutional barrier has actually been, when a new compulsory Canadian history course was added to the provincial curriculum last year, Acadian, African, and Mi'kmaq history were all designated as acceptable Canadian content for the course, but Gaelic history was not. Once again, Gaels were forced to justify the legitimacy of their presence in Nova Scotia to have their culture acknowledged in their own schools. After another round of battling, Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture has been deemed sufficiently "Canadian" to be included as acceptable Canadian content for the compulsory history course.

There have been useful gains in education recently, but Gaelic's position is still far from secure in the schools — a point made abundantly clear any time budgets are cut or tightened. A clear and committed policy for Gaelic in Nova Scotia would undoubtedly help engender a sense of confidence in the culture's place in the school system, but at the moment, there remains a crippling lack of coordination of even the present limited initiatives. For instance, educational authorities suggested that the grade 11 Gaelic Cultural Studies Distributive Education Course not be offered this year, citing a lack of interest, seemingly unaware that they had forgotten to include it in the list of available courses on the Internet "course board" in spite of repeated notification by the teacher, Bernard Cameron. The course never was advertised and only went ahead thanks to local teachers' letting students know that the course was, indeed, available (Interview: Bernard Cameron, March 2001).

In addition to such fumbles, basic provision of Gaelic courses remains limited and piecemeal, and Gaels are forced to fight tooth and nail for every small advance. Jessica Farrell, a grade 10 student at Rankin Memorial School in Iona recently wrote an impassioned and well-informed letter to the Cape Breton–Victoria Regional School Board, outlining the desire for improved Gaelic instruction in their area and the role the school could play in stabilizing a seriously threatened culture.

> Rankin Memorial School currently has a Community Gaelic Arts course (grade 10) and a Gaelic Cultural Studies course (grade 11), but no Gaelic Language courses at the high school level.
>
> Many in the community (including the youth) fear that the Gaelic Language will be lost in this area since it is no longer spoken in the home. The students in this school feel that it is important to have this course to keep the Gaelic Language 'alive'.
>
> Rankin Memorial's Gaelic courses teacher (Dawn MacDonald-Gillis) is fully qualified to teach a Gaelic Language Course and it would increase her teaching hours. By having a teacher already working at the school with enough teaching time to teach this course, a new teacher would not have to be hired.
>
> Students should also have flexible programs that "offer to all students patterns of courses appropriate to their individual needs" and "that help him/her develop

> broader personal interests and abilities." (*Quotes taken from 1998–1999 Public School Program.*)
>
> It would be an excellent course to offer the students of our small Celtic communities and it would be much appreciated by the students and members of the community. (Letter: Jessica Farrell, 8 January 2001)

The potential for the development of a world-class Gaelic studies program in Nova Scotian schools is enormous, and the critical role such a program could play in ensuring the viability of Gaelic, difficult to underestimate. Many of the students currently interested in the program demonstrate a deep interest in the well-being and progress of their communities and see their Gaelic heritage as an important part of that larger package. Many come from families in which Gaelic is or has been recently spoken, and many demonstrate the well-rounded Gaelic cultural skills that were once so common in Gaelic Nova Scotia. The Gaelic Cultural Studies students at Dalbrae Academy in Mabou, including students from Mabou, Judique, Port Hood, and Whycocomagh, recently displayed all of those attributes in their decision to "give something back to the community" as part of their class project under the direction of Margie Beaton. They took on the financial risk of organizing a professional concert at the 500-seat Strathspey Place auditorium, hiring respected performers such as Gordie Sampson and Buddy MacMaster besides performing themselves. The concert was not only a great success, it highlighted the natural talents that many of these students bring with them to Gaelic language and Gaelic cultural studies. Several of the students were fluent Gaelic speakers, and an enormously high proportion skilled in other aspects of the Gaelic arts, such as Gaelic singing, fiddling, piping, and step dancing.

UM EQUIPMENT
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ATHLETIC DEPT.

(Dalbrae Concert: Gaelic singer Colin Watson; photo courtesy of the Inverness *Oran*)

(Dalbrae Concert: Pipers Rankin MacInnis and Kenneth MacKenzie; photo courtesy of the Inverness *Oran*)

(Dalbrae Concert: Fiddlers Calum MacKenzie, Kenneth MacKenzie, and Blair MacDonald; photo courtesy of the Inverness *Oran*)

In spite of the remarkable talent and creativity that the Gaelic cultural studies students demonstrate, it must be added that most of these talents have been nurtured *outside* the school system. At the moment, there is no program for the teaching of the Gaelic arts in Nova Scotia schools. What provision currently exists is there largely by accident. Margie Beaton and Bernard Cameron have no formal training in music and are not employed as music teachers but do teach Gaelic song to their students due to its central importance to the culture and thanks to their own personal exposure to the art. Jackie Dunn-MacIsaac of St. Andrew's, Monica MacDougall of Antigonish, and Amanda MacDougall of Judique incorporate traditional music into their respective music programs at Bay View Academy, Port Hood; Riverview High School, Sydney; and Dalbrae Academy, Mabou, but only because they happen to be traditional musicians as well as teachers. Their formal training in music did not include traditional Gaelic music and, since such training is nowhere available, their jobs are not dependent on their ability to provide such instruction. They incorporate traditional music into the school programs because of personal interest and because of a sense of responsibility to the communities in which they find themselves teaching.

In her proposal for a locally developed course entitled "Traditional Music of Cape Breton," Monica MacDougall outlined the need for such instruction:

> At the present time, students of Cape Breton high schools have no opportunity to learn extensively of the traditions of their area's music. Many people (musicians and otherwise) are making a living from this music and local high schools should give students the opportunity to help prepare for a career in this field. Also, Cape Bretoners are internationally known for their music. Without studying it in school, many students in Cape Breton, especially in the urban centers, may only experience the music in a superficial way. (Application for Approval of a Locally Developed Course; Monica MacDougall 2000, 2)

She went on to explain how the course would specifically enhance an already rich musical background:

> Students will express their creativity and personal ideas through the creation and production of a music that is already an important part of who they are ... The course will draw on the vast resources of the community to enable the students to see their place in their culture and how they can contribute to it ... By recognizing and valuing their own rich musical and heritage, students will base their growth on a sense of pride and stability in who they are. (MacDougall 2000, 1)

These music teachers believed that the current music program in Nova Scotia was sufficiently flexible to allow such meaningful development of traditional Gaelic music programs, and they also felt that the officials involved in planning were very open to such innovation. However, there remain the familiar problems: uncertain budgets and the vulnerability of arts programs to cuts, no official program, and no training for teachers who are not already well grounded in the tradition. There are also somewhat unsettling accounts of other teachers refusing to teach traditional music, such as Cape Breton fiddling, to young people until they have been grounded in classical music theory and one recent account of a former music professor at St. Francis Xavier University refusing to have anything to do with traditional Cape Breton music, which she dismissed as "not real music" (Interview: Dawn MacDonald-Gillis, March 2001).

In the face of declining strength in the informal methods of cultural transmission, it is abundantly clear that more progressive and proactive attitudes will need to be engendered in the provincial music-training infrastructure if Gaelic music is to continue to flourish in Nova Scotia. Where such progressive attitudes already exist, an effort to give traditional music teaching and training higher priority will be critical. A public school program offering traditional Scottish music in a Gaelic environment has been initiated in Plockton in the Scottish Highlands and may serve as a useful model for what could be done here in Nova Scotia, particularly at a school like Dalbrae in Mabou or Rankin Memorial in Iona. In that program there is sufficient flexibility to bring in "artists in residence" — traditional musicians — for designated terms to share their skills with students. Gaelic Nova Scotia is particularly blessed in this regard with a large pool of talented and generous tradition bearers who could give a Nova Scotian "centre of excellence" educational initiative powerful support. Adding traditional Gaelic culture to the higher levels of the educational system in such a formal way with clear educational goals would also give the culture recognition it has never enjoyed, making a strong statement about its validity.

Multiculturalism and Post-Secondary Education

In the new and improved multicultural environment of the 1970s, the Gaelic community showed renewed vigour and, serious questions were asked about the real depth of institutional commitment to the Gaelic language at the post-secondary level:

> The College in Cape Breton and the University in Antigonish should take a long look at its Scottish program. All of us who are interested in preserving our Scottish culture should make an assessment as to whether these institutions are serious about what is being offered. (D. J. MacEachen, "Gaelic: Does it Have a Future in Cape Breton," term paper in Celtic Studies at Hatfield Polytechnic in England – Ken MacKinnon – published as a three-part series in the *Cape Breton Highlander*, 27 August 1975: 8)

At the time MacEachen recommended some academic soul searching, Gaelic appeared to be in a relatively healthy state in the post-secondary educational system, at least on the surface. A full-time professor, C. I. N. MacLeod, was employed in Celtic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University. Gaelic was being offered at the College of Cape Breton in 1975–76 by John Shaw; and Norman MacDonald, from the Isle of Skye, was hired by the College of Cape Breton in 1978 to teach sociology but also Gaelic. MacDonald taught Gaelic at St Ann's Gaelic College as part of the first co-operative venture between the two institutions and became the first (and, to date, only) Gaelic-speaking Executive Director of the college in 1983. But, as the example of public schools demonstrated, appearances of health could be deceiving. In many respects confidence in the culture was at an all-time low in the 1970s and '80s, when the number of Gaelic speakers had dropped to less than 1,500 across the province. MacDonald highlighted the problem:

> Since the language's existence is now confined largely to underdeveloped rural areas, it might be thought that what one writer has called "the old sense of shame for the language" could be a factor in attitudes towards it, as reported in a recent study which found only 19.4% of respondents indicated Gaelic linguistic heritage in a Nova Scotia group which was 52.4% of Scottish ancestry. (Norman MacDonald, "Putting on the Kilt: The Scottish stereotype and ethnic community survival in Cape Breton", *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, XX, 3, 1988: 136)

Moreover, as Elizabeth Mertz pointed out, Gaelic instructional efforts during this period were uncoordinated, piecemeal, and generally short lived. (Mertz 1982, 209)

> There were, for example, Adult Education Classes in Gaelic given in Sydney, North Sydney, Baddeck, Antigonish, New Glasgow, New Waterford, Halifax and Yarmouth in 1978–79. This list is without a doubt incomplete, yet no organizer of

> Gaelic promotion events in Sydney, Antigonish, or St. Ann's was aware of the existence of all the classes noted here. (Mertz 1982, 209)

The Gaelic instruction that had been on offer rapidly began to dwindle. Norman MacDonald left the College of Cape Breton, after his brief stint at the helm of the Gaelic College, to return to his native Isle of Skye. Gaelic continued only as a part-time offering at University College of Cape Breton, when available at all, and the coordination with the Gaelic College initiated more than 20 years ago has, as yet, failed to realize any significant academic goals. One of the leading scholars on Nova Scotian tradition, Dr. John Shaw, who had conducted the Gaelic Folklore Project for St. Francis Xavier University, and who had taught Gaelic at University College of Cape Breton also left part-time employment in Nova Scotia to accept a full-time position with the leading Gaelic development organization in Scotland, later moving on to a full time position with the University of Aberdeen Celtic Department and then to the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. He is presently a senior lecturer at the School of Scottish Studies and has recently published his second major bilingual book on Nova Scotia's Gaelic tradition.

At present, the University College of Cape Breton offers two courses in the Gaelic language, with a combined enrolment of 20 students and a handful of other courses, which are presented under the "Scottish," "Gaelic," or "Celtic" umbrella, but which could only be described as extremely remotely connected to Nova Scotia's Gaelic tradition. The university does not employ any full-time faculty with an academic specialty in Cape Breton's Gaelic culture or history or even an historian or cultural scholar with a specialty in the modern Scottish era, generally, who could develop a facility with the Cape Breton material.

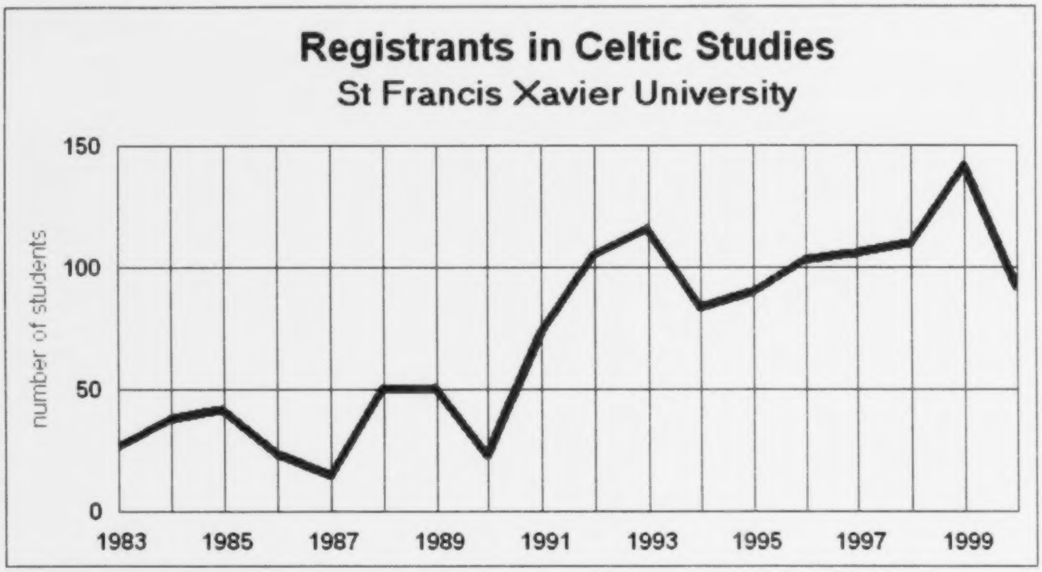
The university's Beaton Institute Archive does offer great potential for course development and research, however. Although it has expanded its original Gaelic mandate to include all of Cape Breton's ethnic cultures, its Gaelic holdings still make up an impressive share of the archives' more than 3,000 manuscript collections and 3,500 audio and video tapes. Formerly, the Beaton Institute could rely on the services of resource people like Kay MacDonald and Dougie MacPhee of New Waterford to aid users of the archive. MacDonald, a Gaelic speaker, developed useful indexes for Gaelic materials, such as MacTalla, and could assist with translation. MacPhee, a noted piano accompanist, had a detailed knowledge of the archives' traditional music holdings. Unfortunately, due once again to tightening budgets, the university no longer employs anyone at the Beaton Institute Archive with the competence in the Gaelic language to work with these extensive Gaelic recordings.

The positive environment Ottawa created for multicultural endeavours in the 1970s resulted in solid, lasting gains for Gaelic in post-secondary education only at St. Francis Xavier University. Toward the end of the decade, Gaelic was in potential trouble again with the sudden death of C. I. N. MacLeod in 1977 and the retirement of the Rev. Dr. Malcolm MacDonell, the university's last Gaelic-speaking president, the following year. At that time, no clear plan was in place for a continuing program of Gaelic studies at the university, and the number of faculty who could speak the language was at an all time low. Fortunately, Sr. Margaret MacDonell PhD, a fluent Gaelic speaker from Hillsdale in Cape Breton, was on staff as a professor of history and was able to maintain continuity, teaching Gaelic and Celtic history in addition to her other teaching duties. Besides carrying out research and producing two important books on Gaelic tradition, she also helped organize the Gaelic Folklore Project and was an important advocate for the establishment of a chair of Gaelic studies at the university. These two initiatives would ensure a lasting presence for Gaelic at the university.

Although the continuing advocacy of faculty inside the university was important, two of the most impressive Gaelic schemes undertaken by St. Francis Xavier University were initiated by an external source — namely the federal government. Generous financial support was provided by the Multiculturalism Directorate to fund extensive field recording of Gaelic tradition. St. Francis Xavier University applied for three years of funding, but the Multiculturalism Directorate felt the project so important that it recommended and granted five years of funding — a gift of $150,000. Similarly, the Chair of Gaelic Studies initiative came from a federal government scheme to fund chairs of ethnic studies across Canada. St. Francis Xavier University was actively encouraged by the federal government to apply for the $600,000 seed grant and was successful in landing one of the 28 ethnic chairs that were established under the scheme.

The need for a push external to the university to get these plans under way was not unique to St. Francis Xavier University. In its 1997 report on the progress of the 28 Chairs that had been funded under the Ethnic Chairs Scheme, the Department of Canadian Heritage pointed out that the Chair of Irish Studies at Saint Mary's, one of its five case studies, had been established not due to the academic plan of the university administration but due to strong community demand for such a field of study. A recent plan to introduce a Scottish studies program at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia was similarly instigated by lobbying from outside the university. In spite of the university's name and its extensive use of Highland Scottish symbology in its ceremonial functions (even down to having its own pipe band), it had not previously demonstrated an interest in including Highland Scottish culture in any way in its academic program.

With the seed money from the Ethnic Chairs Scheme in place, St. Francis Xavier University initiated its new Celtic Studies program. In 1984, Dr. Ken Nilsen, a Harvard scholar with a specialty in Irish and Celtic languages, was hired as the first professor and began his teaching duties. Dr. Nilsen had developed an interest in Nova Scotia's Scottish Gaelic culture while living in Boston, where he came into contact with Nova Scotia's large expatriate Gaelic community. He offered courses in Scottish Gaelic in Boston (supported by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts) and recorded some of the Nova Scotian tradition bearers living in the area before coming to St. Francis Xavier University to take up his post in 1984. Since that time the Celtic Studies program has grown slowly but steadily, reaching a peak of 142 students in 1999.



(Derived from statistics supplied by Dr. Kenneth Nilsen, Department of Celtic Studies, St. Francis Xavier University)

Principally an undergraduate program, only a limited number of Masters theses have been supervised over the last 18 years, but an honours course has been established in 2000, with the first graduate expected in May 2001. On average, five courses a year have been offered since the establishment of the chair, with an emphasis on Gaelic language instruction. St. Francis Xavier University offers three years of Scottish Gaelic, the only institution in North America to do so. Courses in literature have been regularly offered, but courses on folklore and history only irregularly. One-week Gaelic immersion courses were also offered in the first summer session from 1987-1992 but have since been discontinued. Since 1995, the St Francis Xavier Gaelic Summer Scholarship has enabled eight St Francis Xavier students to attend a summer short course at *Sabhal Mór Ostaig* Gaelic College on the Isle of Skye. Courses currently on offer are first-, second-, and third-year Scottish Gaelic, Irish Gaelic, Celtic Literature, and Scottish Bardic Poetry, as well as several directed-studies topics.

Visiting lectures enables the department to expand its course offereings. In 1992, one of these, Ms. Catriona Parsons of the Isle of Lewis, was hired on as a full-time faculty member in the department and was later given tenure. She had been an instructor at the Gaelic College at St. Ann's and had taught the Summer Immersion Course at St. Francis Xavier University from 1987-92. A third full-time position is expected next year, thanks to the generous donation of $1 million from an individual in Europe interested in promoting Celtic studies. This position will be known as the "Ben Alder" chair and will be a full-time teaching position. It is not currently a tenure-track position, but Professor Nilsen believes that may change in the future.

In addition to courses, St. Francis Xavier University has significant Gaelic holdings on site. The federally funded Gaelic Folklore Project resulted in the housing at the university of probably the most significant collection of Scottish Gaelic oral tradition outside Scotland — in excess of 2,000 items collected from over 150 individuals. While this targeted recording was being done by Dr. John Shaw, negotiations were also conducted for the donation of 18 private sound recording collections (one extending to 400 items). More recently, the St. Francis Xavier University Video Project has resulted in the taping of 30 hours of material from 28 tradition bearers. Proposals are being prepared to have this material catalogued, digitally re-recorded and edited before making it widely available. In addition, Professor Nilsen has compiled a personal collection of videotapes of more than 50 individuals, which he believes to be the most extensive Scottish Gaelic video collection in existence, and a larger assortment of audiotapes. This material is used by Professor Nilsen in his classes at St. Francis Xavier University.

Besides taped material, some 7,345 items directly related to Scottish or Celtic studies are housed at the Special Collections Library, of which about 1,000 are completely or substantially in the Gaelic language. Approximately 6,000 of the items are books and 1,000 serial volumes. The library also subscribes to 26 major Celtic journals. Over half the items in the Special Collections Library were donated by interested individuals, such as the late Hugh MacPhee, former head of Gaelic at the British Broadcasting Corporation, who left a bequest of 1,200 items. Unfortunately, the Special Collections Library operates on restricted hours and is not open during the summer months. With very little in the way of high-profile solicitation or fundraising efforts, Gaelic has attracted both large amounts of money to St. Francis Xavier University (well in excess of $2,000,000, to date) and impressive material resources.

Although there have been some impressive gains for Gaelic in post-secondary education over the last decades, it is still impossible for students to attend a complete program of Scottish Gaelic studies anywhere in Canada. Only a handful of universities in Canada provide even a limited offering of courses in Scottish Gaelic language or literature or in general Scottish history, in spite of the country's large and long-established Scottish population, and none appears to offer regular courses on Gaelic history or Gaelic traditional music.

As far as Gaelic language instruction goes, the only universities in the country that appear to offer regular Scottish Gaelic language courses are St. Francis Xavier, University College of Cape Breton, Saint Mary's, the University of Toronto, and the University of Ottawa, and at three of those universities the courses are offered as adjuncts to what are essentially Irish studies programs. St. Francis Xavier University has the only Scottish Gaelic studies program. University College of Cape Breton has no Gaelic or Celtic studies program but currently has 20 students in first- and second-year Gaelic, taught by Hector MacNeil. Saint Mary's University in Halifax has an Irish studies program but offers Scottish Gaelic courses as well. At the moment there are ten students enrolled in its first-year Scottish Gaelic course taught by Joe Murphy. Funds are being raised to add a second- and third-year course in an effort to broaden the Irish Gaelic Studies program by incorporating what the chair coordinator Cyril Byrne clearly feels is an important strand of the bigger Gaelic tapestry and a particularly important strand in Nova Scotia.

While these programs give students valuable training in the language, none of them is sufficiently intensive to produce functional Gaelic speakers — a worrying fact for those who may look to such programs to help reverse the trend of language decline. The universities cannot do it on their own. Better provision for Gaelic in the public schools and better coordination between the two levels of education will be critical if fluency in Gaelic is to be achieved by any significant number of Nova Scotians.

Considering the influence of Scots in Canada, the number of courses available in universities across Canada on Scottish or Scottish Canadian history seems astonishingly small. Of the courses that are available, most are taught from a Lowland Scottish perspective with little or no Gaelic content. In Nova Scotia, for instance, Dalhousie and Saint Mary's offer Scottish history courses but have no staff members with any training in Scottish Gaelic. University College of Cape Breton similarly has a small offering of medieval Scottish history courses but no historian trained in Gaelic or with expertise in the history of the modern Highlands leading up to the emigration era or of Gaelic Nova Scotia. Oddly enough, the St. Francis Xavier University history department offers no courses in Scottish or Gaelic history and employs no one with competence in Gaelic who could conceivably develop a high-quality course in this area. Since this report was originally written, the Department of Celtic Studies has indicated that it plans to offer a course on Scottish or Scottish-Canadian history on a yearly basis.

This underdevelopment seems particularly unfortunate, as Celtic departments in Scotland have long since realized that such courses are invaluable in attracting students to their Celtic studies programs, particularly given the low level of knowledge concerning the Gaelic language in wider society. Many students choosing their slate of university courses have no idea of the significance of Gaelic, of any connection it may have to their past, and in more cases than many Gaelic advocates would like to admit, even of its existence as a living language. Courses in history and culture have proved a potent method of combating that problem in Scotland.

One of the most popular and accessible strands of Gaelic culture is its music. In the last decade, in particular, traditional Cape Breton music has earned international accolades. Despite this, no university in Canada offers a traditional Gaelic music program. In fact, other than University College of Cape Breton's occasional experimentation in this area (a web course designed by Kate Dunlay, an ethnomusicologist with a specialty in Cape Breton, there does not appear to be a single course on the subject anywhere in Canada. St. Francis Xavier University has a music program but it is devoted to jazz and employs no faculty skilled in the Gaelic tradition. Indeed, as noted earlier, two young Nova Scotian traditional musicians in the Education program who were taking a music elective were shocked to hear one music professor, who has since left the university, dismiss their tradition as "not real music," since it did not strictly conform to classical music norms (Interview: Dawn MacDonald, March 2001).

The complete absence of courses in Gaelic traditional music in Canada, and particularly in Nova Scotia, stands in dramatic contrast to provision in other countries. Several American universities, for instance, offer courses in Irish traditional music, and one, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, even includes a segment on the Cape Breton tradition in its web-based traditional music course. In Ireland and Scotland, post-secondary institutions, such as Cork University or the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama provide fully accredited programs in traditional Irish and Scottish music respectively. Resident musicians in both of the latter programs have spent time in Cape Breton and are staunch admirers of the Gaelic musical tradition — one even wrote her PhD thesis on the Cape Breton fiddling tradition.

At a time when "Celtic" or "East Coast Music" was making waves across the country and internationally, St. Francis Xavier University's promotional literature made almost no mention of its own Celtic roots or of the fact that performers such as Mary Jane Lamond, Kendra MacGillivray, or the late John Morris Rankin of the Rankin Family were St. Francis Xavier University graduates. This, at least, appears to be changing. Since this report was originally written, St. Francis Xavier University has introduced a course in Gaelic music for 2002-2003. It will feature as guest lecturers some of the finest performers of Celtic music from Nova Scotia, Scotland, and Ireland. (Information courtesy of Professor Ken Nilsen)

Scottish Gaelic courses offerings in Canada tend to be fragmented, isolated, and in some instances, slightly dislocated from the Gaelic community. A student in the United States, by contrast, who wishes to pursue an interest in (Irish) Gaelic studies, could do so at one of three universities in the Boston area alone and could study Irish literature, history, politics, culture, and traditional music as part of a well-rounded program at Boston College, complete with instruction by tradition bearers, such as musicians, who are employed on a full-time basis. Nothing even remotely like that is possible anywhere in Canada for the prospective Scottish Gaelic student.

This general academic malaise is unfortunate for Gaelic studies in Canada but presents Nova Scotian universities with a unique opportunity to develop a real centre for excellence in Scottish Gaelic studies in North America. The potential for the development of courses in history, culture, music, and genealogy, both during the university year and in summer sessions, and for the further development of existing language and literature programs seems enormous. Co-operative efforts between the three main academic players, St. Francis Xavier University, University College of Cape Breton and Saint Mary's, and with other institutions, such as the Department of Education, the Department of Tourism and Culture, the Gaelic College, and the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum might bear real fruit and generate the kind of sparks necessary to help rekindle the culture throughout eastern Nova Scotia.

In addition to offering courses, universities also host conferences on Celtic subjects at which scholars from all over the world might gather. In recent decades, Canadian universities have become active in this regard, and have helped attract greater international attention to Canadian Gaelic culture. St. Michael's College at the

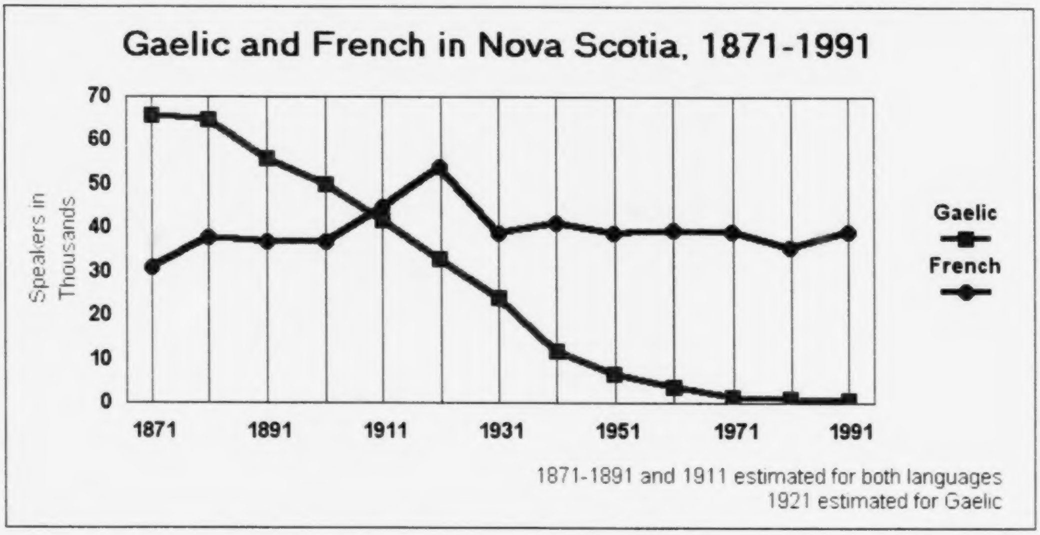
University of Toronto hosted the first large conference of this nature in the modern era of Celtic Studies in 1978, producing a book of selected essays from the conference in 1982 entitled "The Celtic Consciousness". It presently hosts annual Celtic conferences and has featured Cape Breton tradition bearers.

After the federally sponsored chairs in Ethnic Studies were established in the early 1980s, Celtic conferences became more prominent. In 1988 the Department of Celtic Studies at Ottawa University hosted the First North American Congress of Celtic Studies in 1986, producing the book, "Proceedings of the First North American Congress of Celtic Studies", c.1988. In 1989 the Department of Irish Studies at St. Mary's University in Halifax hosted the Second North American Congress of Celtic Studies, which showcased Cape Breton tradition bearers in a prominent cultural celebration that accompanied the academic proceedings. It also published the book, "Celtic Languages and Celtic Peoples: Proceedings of the Second North American Congress of Celtic Studies", c.1992. In 1992 St. Francis Xavier University also hosted the Celtic Studies Association of North America Conference, featuring Sorley MacLean as the keynote speaker and participation from other leading Celtic scholars from Ireland, Norway, Canada, and the United States. In 1997 St. Francis Xavier University hosted the North American Association of Celtic Language Teachers Conference. Since this report was originally written, St. Francis Xavier University has once again hosted the North American Association of Celtic Language Teachers in May 2002, featuring Mark Wringe of Sabhal Mor Ostaig as keynote speaker. (Information courtesy of Professor Ken Nilsen)

In the late 1980s, University College of Cape Breton hosted an unusual and seminal conference. Rather than a strictly academic gathering this conference was designed to bring together Gaelic stakeholders from throughout Nova Scotia to discuss the way ahead for the language and culture in the province. The conference used a consensus-building approach for identifying and discussing the most critical topics and at the end produced an interesting report with recommendations for Gaelic development in Nova Scotia entitled, "Options for the '90s". Unfortunately, the report did not appear to result in any concrete action.

The Current Status of Gaelic in Nova Scotia

At the beginning of the 21st century, the state of Gaelic in Nova Scotia is perilous. Not more than 100 years ago, Scottish Gaelic was the fourth most common language in Canada, and Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia outnumbered all other language groups combined, with the exception of English speakers. Today, many Canadians have never even heard of the Gaelic language, and the numbers of Scottish Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia are so few that the 1996 Canadian census did not even have a discrete category for Scottish Gaelic in Nova Scotia, although there were distinct categories for languages such as Arabic and Chinese. The small number of speakers makes it difficult (for privacy reasons) even to identify specific communities of strength in the province, since the smallest census divisions cover large areas of counties. One community, however — Judique, in Inverness County — has compiled its own register of Gaelic speakers in its district. The best estimate that can be made of the number of Gaelic speakers in the province as a whole is somewhere close to 500, just below the combined total of 542 Irish and Scottish Gaelic speakers enumerated in the last census. That represents an astonishing 99 per cent decline over the past century. A comparison with the fate of French in Nova Scotia over the same period is striking.



Gaelic and French in Nova Scotia, 1871-1991

1871-1891 and 1911 estimated for both languages
1921 estimated for Gaelic

Centuries of repression and, more recently, the impact of generations of linguistic exclusion from the major institutions that were to shape and support society, undermined confidence in the language to the extent that natural family transmission from generation to generation — or *bho ghlùin gu glùin* (from knee to knee) — ceased. As a result, most Gaelic speakers in the province today are senior citizens, and the vast majority of the much smaller number of younger speakers has had to learn Gaelic at least partly through the limited institutional channels available. This dislocation has been a painful one, and frustration is widely evident among younger people interested in the language. If Gaelic is to have a future in Nova Scotia, the institutions that have played such a significant role in undermining the culture must now begin providing meaningful support and opportunities.

It may be argued that, since Gaelic has reached such a critical stage of decline and since Gaels themselves decided to let the language die, efforts at this time on behalf of the language would be a waste of time and money. While the situation is undeniably grim, it should be remembered that past decisions regarding Gaelic were made in an environment of prejudice and ignorance and, on the part of Gaels, at certain key junctures, a degree of helplessness. Decisions made today are likely to result in very different outcomes. Old myths about the inherent backwardness of Gaelic and of the superiority and desirability of a monocultural society have been effectively exploded. Today, people are keenly interested in the richness inherent in a culturally diverse society, and many of Gaelic ancestry see no good reason why their culture should not be an important part of that tapestry.

There are presently more than 25 individuals and institutions, including three universities and several public schools, teaching Gaelic to roughly 800 learners in Nova Scotia. It should be noted that these 800 learners represent only those who are currently attending a formal or semi-formal Gaelic class of instruction. It does not count learners who have completed university programs or other courses and who may be studying the language independently or who are currently in between summer programs, such as the Gaelic College's offering. The number of people who are at various stages in their acquisition of the Gaelic language in Nova Scotia, and who might be interested in improved coursing, is likely, therefore, to be very much larger than this figure would indicate. The problem seems not to be one of a lack of interest in the language but of a continuing lack of opportunities and resources for effective Gaelic language instruction.

Similarly, the old argument that Gaelic had to be dropped for economic reasons is becoming increasingly untenable. It would be very difficult to demonstrate that the period of Gaelic decline and English ascendancy this century has seen a corresponding increase in the economic prosperity or stability of Gaelic communities. In fact, when considered against the economic performance of rural Acadian communities in eastern Nova Scotia, which did not accept the economic imperative of abandoning their language, the evidence might well suggest that the loss of Gaelic has had a seriously negative effect in those key areas. While such an analysis is outside the scope of this report, it is important to point out what Nova Scotia stands to lose economically today if Gaelic is lost. Gaelic culture currently contributes tens of millions of dollars to the Nova Scotia economy. Language is the glue that holds Gaelic culture together and gives it its distinctiveness. If the Gaelic language goes, there is every reason to believe that the culture will, at the very least, be severely diminished, losing much if not most of its distinctive character. If for no other reason than to ensure that a potent economic engine continues to perform, supporting Gaelic now makes good sense.

SECTION TWO: GAELIC CULTURE IN NOVA SCOTIA

The Social Environment

Properly speaking, Gaelic culture extends to all facets of life. It is, quite simply, how the community existed. However, this section of the report will focus on Gaelic cultural expression or Gaelic cultural arts. Attempting to sift examples of cultural expression from the other processes of life in Gaelic communities is, in many respects, an artificial exercise, for Gaelic cultural expression informed and infused all facets of that rural life, from social behavior to economic strategies, from entertainment to ceremony and ritual, from the pursuit of spiritual fulfillment to the development of sense of identity, and a host of other tangible and intangible elements. These processes, in turn, shaped Gaelic cultural expression. It may be plausibly argued that in a folk society, such as existed in Gaelic Nova Scotia until very recently, the view of "cultural arts" or "cultural expression" would have been a decidedly more holistic and functional one than might be used today. With that proviso, an attempt will be made to highlight what seem to be the most important and enduring examples of the Gaelic cultural arts in Nova Scotia and to explain how they have been maintained and transmitted in their New World setting.

Gaelic Society: A Social Order in Transition

When Gaels began immigrating to Nova Scotia, the major signs of social collapse were in the top levels of the Gaelic social structure where the initial assimilative pressure had been most heavily applied by external authorities. Gaelic society had always been aristocratic and stratified, but it was also compact and intimate. That meant that chiefs, middle-class tacksmen, and the common people of the clan were in close and relatively continual physical and intellectual contact. They shared most of the same major cultural reference points and considered themselves to be of the same people and culture. Travelers in the Highlands often remarked with surprise upon the intelligent conversation and polite manners they met even among the ranks of the common people.

> [Nobleman] J. F. Campbell attributed his almost intuitive understanding of other European folk cultures to his childhood experiences of the extraordinary social freedom found in Gaelic Society in Argyle. An earlier example of social freedom in the Highlands is found in the writing of Adam Ferguson (1723–1816). The son of a minister from Logierait in the Perthshire *Gàidhealtachd*, the Gaelic-speaking Ferguson was chaplain of the Black Watch from 1744 to 1754 and professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University from 1764 to 1785. His memories of the Highlands extended from the 1720s until the 1750s. A seasoned scholar who had traveled in France and talked to Voltaire, he wrote, "Had I not been in the Highlands of Scotland I might be of their mind who think the inhabitants of Paris and Versailles the only polite people in the world." In the Highlander he knew one who could "perfectly perform kindness with dignity; can discern what is proper to oblige … [and who] having never seen a superior, does not know what it is to be embarrassed." (Gibson 1998, 140)

The social interaction between the highest and lowest ranks in society, the degree of freedom and camaraderie, and the correspondingly common self-confidence seemed to stand in marked distinction to the situation with which many of the incoming visitors were familiar in their own regions of Britain and Europe. As the accounts of observers, such as Lord John Ramsay of Ochtertyre (1736–1814) suggest, after the breakdown of the old Gaelic social structure in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, these features began disappearing from the Highlands as well.

> The duinewassals [Gaelic gentry] and commons being bred together in the same sports and pursuits, and having the same friends and enemies, lived on the footing of familiarity which nowadays would be considered as mean and unbecoming. (Ramsay; Gibson 1998, 170)

The impetus for this social change was anglicization. The great chiefs had been the earliest and most important targets selected by Lowland Scottish and British authorities for assimilation, and they were the first to be pulled away from Gaelic cultural norms. Indeed, most eventually left Gaelic Scotland altogether to settle in the south of Scotland or England. In their new cultural environment, there could be little sense of this old intimacy with the common people of the Highlands. With them, too, went the patronage that had formerly supported formal Gaelic learning and the institutional Gaelic arts. The loss of this patronage and the economic changes that were introduced in the mid-18th century essentially left the Gaelic middle class with no functional role in society and it effectively disappeared.

By the emigration era, the signs of this decline in the middle ranks of Gaelic society were everywhere apparent. Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair (Alexander MacDonald) of Moidart, one of the greatest Gaelic poets of the 18th century and the first to have his works published, was also one of the last to be literate in Gaelic. When his relatives, friends, and countrymen began emigrating in large numbers for Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island in the 1770s, he was one of only a handful of people left in the Gaelic world who could still read and write the literary classical Gaelic language that had once been the common medium of learning and high literature throughout Gaelic Scotland and Ireland. The great MacMhuirich (Currie) poets of South Uist, from whom Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair had learned so much, had been the pre-eminent literary family in Scottish Gaeldom for some 600 years or more. By the 19th century, they had ceased their art and none of them could read the ancient Gaelic manuscripts they had maintained for generations or even the simplest of Gaelic poetry. The Beatons, who had been on record as physicians in Scotland for 500 years and whose personal libraries included works in languages as diverse as Gaelic, Greek, Latin, and English, among others, had ceased practicing medicine, and it seems unlikely that they were still literate in Gaelic by the time they began emigrating to the Maritimes from Lochaber and Skye. The Rankin pipers who had been associated with the MacLeans of Mull for centuries closed their college in Coll in the late 18th century, and the senior pipers left for Prince Edward Island in the early 1800s. When the Bard John MacLean of Tiree left his position as poet to the Laird of Coll in 1819 to settle eventually at Barney's River, Pictou County, he was not only the last professional traditional poet in Gaelic society but also very probably the last of these great men of learning and art.

It would be difficult to underestimate what was lost to Gaelic culture during this period. The leaders of Gaelic society in Scotland were transformed over several generations into increasingly powerful, increasingly distant, and increasingly anglicized landlords with little comprehension of or real sympathy for their ancestral culture or for the living Gaelic communities over which they wielded such colossal authority. The middle class, who provided most of the professional or infrastructural framework for Gaelic society and who played an important role in translating and adapting external ideas and innovations into Gaelic society in ways calculated to strengthen rather than undermine the local culture, were forced from their Gaelic social roles, assimilating into the English middle class, in some cases, or back into the mainstream of rural Gaelic society. A large proportion of this class immigrated to the New World. These developments not only robbed Gaelic of important domains of rich cultural expression, they made Gaelic society less adaptable, less diverse in its skill base and more vulnerable to external mediation and, hence, to further deterioration.

At a time of rapid social and economic change, the removal of the very cultural tools that would have best helped Gaels to adapt their society to the shifting sands of modernity was particularly damaging. Had there been the opportunity to integrate these innovations into Gaelic society in a manner that would have been beneficial to Gaels, taking into account local realities, resources, and needs and helping to rebuild the broken Gaelic world, the post-1745 history of Gaelic Scotland would have been very different. Instead, that history was one of continued destruction. That ongoing decline in Scotland had serious and sometimes surprising repercussions for the Gaelic community in Nova Scotia even long after emigration ended. Gaelic cultural survival from the late 18th century on both sides of the Atlantic depended almost entirely on a resolutely rural-based folk society.

However truncated and vulnerable Gaelic society may have been by the late 18th and early 19th centuries, it was still remarkably rich, robust, and in many ways, confident. In some respects, this was even truer of the large Gaelic community that established itself in Nova Scotia than it was of the community left behind in Scotland. Here, Gaels were able to free themselves from their former chiefs-turned-landlords and to own their own land. This freed them from the cadres of southern speculators and officials who were moving into the Highlands and provided their communities with a measure of security and independence not available in Scotland. The rural communities they established in Nova Scotia were sufficiently large, representative, and homogeneous to ensure that there was no significant break in the pattern of cultural transmission from generation to generation in spite of the geographical dislocation inherent in the migration process.

The Gaelic middle class, who for all intents and purposes disappeared from the Highlands, was evident for a time in Nova Scotia, although its position was somewhat ambiguous. The governing elite of Nova Scotia was solidly English and not well disposed to provide the type of patronage that would have seen the members of this sector of society re-establish their roles as administrators, educators, and artists in the Gaelic tradition. The institutional infrastructure in Nova Scotia remained profoundly English in its cultural orientation, and the Gaelic middle class had to adjust to this fact, as did, in turn, the remainder of the community. As a result, some members of the traditional Gaelic middle class could be found performing at least some of their former roles as leaders and cultural intermediaries, while others assimilated fairly quickly into the English cultural ranks of Nova Scotia's elite, and still others followed paths that were virtually indistinguishable from that of the bulk of the Gaelic farming community. In spite of its relative vigour, the Nova Scotian Gaelic community did not recreate an elite Gaelic culture or a Gaelic institutional infrastructure. As in Scotland, Gaelic survived almost exclusively as an informally transmitted folk culture in rural communities.

Lacking the normally stabilizing influences of this institutional or professional culture, Gaels nevertheless proved astonishingly adept at maintaining and passing on their culture with the less-formal means available to them. Gaels from all levels of society and from every region of the *Gàidhealtachd* were well educated in the common stock of their culture. They appreciated the same masterworks of the same great poets, shared much of the same vast stock of traditional songs and tales, discussed the same lore, preserved the same rich historical and genealogical records, played the same type of music, and danced the same dances. Alongside this common stock of cultural expression, there was also a large store of local tradition and a vital institution of regional and individual creativity. These more localized aspects of Gaelic culture may have enjoyed a heightened intimacy and been less widely known outside their districts, but they nonetheless operated within a Gaelic idiom that was much more widely understood. The fact that so little of this enormous amount of material was recorded in any form other than memory makes the feat of cultural transmission and retention a particularly impressive one.

The Oral Tradition

Understanding the full extent of the prodigious intellectual skills required to faithfully maintain such traditions by memory alone is exceedingly difficult for a literate society so utterly dependent on written records — especially a literate, pop cultural society, which forgets a vast array of cultural items almost as soon as they first appear. Gaels developed cultural knowledge in depth and, along with that, impressive memory skills. For example, Nan MacKinnon (Nan Eachainn Fhionnlaigh) of Vatersay, a small island off Barra, was able to supply more than 400 songs and 1,000 proverbs to folklorists working in the Highlands 40 years ago. While she was clearly an exceptionally good tradition bearer, she was by no means unique, and her repertoire represented only a small fragment of the musical heritage and oral traditions current in the small rural community of her youth. Fieldwork of similar scholarly depth did not occur in Nova Scotia until nearly a generation after this, when the Gaelic community had atrophied greatly and the opportunity to keep cultural skills honed had severely diminished. Nonetheless, it provided similar examples of highly developed memory skills. Joe Neil MacNeil (Eòs Nill Bhig) of Middle Cape, Cape Breton County, was able to give collector Dr. John Shaw 241 items of lore, 150 songs, and 173 tales, many of which were of considerable length and complexity, when he was recorded in the 1980s, in spite of the fact that supportive environment for the practice of his art had long since withered away. (Gaelic Folklore Project Index)

Even today, when literacy has helped erode these aural memory skills within the Gaelic community, some ethnomusicologists speculate that a good Cape Breton fiddler may have anywhere from 500 to 1,000 tunes readily accessible from memory depending on how active he or she might be in the dance circuit, and sometimes a good deal more can be recalled given the right circumstances, such as playing with another fiddler who spurs the memory. (Correspondence: Kate Dunlay, March 2001; Interview: Marianne Jewel, March 2001) This aural/oral tradition set very high standards regarding what was considered a "correct" recounting or expression of traditional material but allowed for considerable creativity in interpretation, as well. Cultural transmission was never rigid or fixed but a process of continuing evolution shaped by many. It was highly dependent on a tight interplay between "tradition bearers" and an intimate and highly informed society. Gaelic culture was deeply rooted in its community.

While the memory skills of tradition bearers are impressive enough when considering the traditions as isolated fragments — fiddling, singing, storytelling and the like — what is even more striking is how often these specialists demonstrated extensive skill in or knowledge of the other traditions.

> A further characteristic ... is the degree to which the various components of the culture appear to be interrelated and mutually supporting, often featured within the performing repertoire of a single individual. To be sure, there are the recognised specialists in song, humorous anecdotes or violin music, but often as not the outstanding tradition-bearers have been among the most versatile: Lauchie MacLellan of Dunvegan [Inverness County] was best known for his songs, yet was also a highly gifted raconteur; Joe Neil MacNeil of Middle Cape [Cape Breton County], widely recognized as a leading storyteller, has a keen ear for music, a profound knowledge of the violin and mouth-music repertoire, and can recite the texts of scores of songs as well; (John Shaw, "Language, Music and Local Esthetics: Views From Gaeldom and Beyond": 2)

Shaw went on to explain why Gaelic tradition bearers had such a well-rounded grasp of cultural expression.

> The obvious source for such versatility among tradition-bearers is the taigh céilidh "céilidh house," Gaeldom's chief cultural institution over recent centuries. Descriptions as current as this century make it clear that those present were encouraged to experience and participate in the whole variety of storytelling, song, music and dance that would be featured in a single evening. The céilidh house thus served to maintain the integrity of Gaeldom's oral and musical culture by creating a social occasion which sustained the ties between the interdependent elements of the tradition. (Shaw, Language: 2-3)

The Ceilidh House and Cultural Transmission

In rural communities where work was a constant part of life but where time was not as rigidly structured as it is today, many opportunities presented themselves for the sharing of the Gaelic cultural arts. Indeed, in some types of work, such as reaping, sowing, milking, spinning, weaving, rowing, and milling, among others, singing became an integral part of the process, often converting what could be dreary, monotonous, and exhausting work into an enjoyable cultural activity. However, there were certain times of the day — usually evenings — and certain times of the year — particularly the winter — when the demands of work were reduced and the opportunities for song, story, lore, music and dance more fully explored. People might gather anywhere, but usually specific homes in a community were preferred, and these became known as "ceilidh houses," from the Gaelic term *cèilidh*, meaning, "to visit." These became the chief institutions in the community for developing and passing on Gaelic social and cultural skills.

The intimate setting of close family, extended kin, neighbours, and friends, as well as the occasional visitor from further afield meant that social context was always crucial in the Gaelic cultural arts. Young people usually put in a long apprenticeship in the ceilidh house learning cultural and social standards that may have been generally unarticulated and informal but that were nevertheless clearly understood and strongly reinforced by the social interaction of the many members of the immediate community who would be present at such gatherings. The high degree of knowledge among those present, including non-performers who occasionally had an understanding of the tradition far in excess of some of those who actually performed the various arts, ensured that the cultural presentation not only adhered to very high standards but that the experience was a very deep one. Gaelic tradition bearers did not perform so much as share their arts.

> Agus bha fearas-chuideachd aca a bha cho math 's a ghabhadh a bhith ann, tha mi 'n dùil . . . cluich neo seinn neo rannan a bha iad a' gabhail, neo òran na bha iad a' deanamh, dannsa a bha sibh a' faicinn, bha sibh còmhla riu anns an fheòil agus bha sibh a' gabhail pairt anns a' ghnothach … Agus bha an toileachadh sin ann – bha 'n aonachd. Tha mi 'n dùil gu robh iad aonaichte. Bha iad aonaichte 'nam feòil agus 'nan spiorad. (Eos Nill Bhig 16-17)
>
> So they had what I consider to be the very best of entertainment ... whether it was playing music or singing or rhymes that they were reciting or songs, or whether they were doing a dance for you to watch — you were alive with them there in the flesh and participating in the whole event … So there was that pleasure and a sense of unity. I think the people felt very united, united physically and united in spirit (MacNeil and Shaw 1987, 16-17).

The social context around Gaelic culture has altered considerably with economic and technological change, but to a very great extent, these cultural values — generous sharing, high standards, apprenticeship, respectful and knowledgeable listening — and the strong social and familial context for performance have been retained. Throughout the 20th century, the ceilidh house and the house party have remained a favoured, though declining, means for passing on cultural tradition. New performance venues, such as community halls, school auditoriums, concert stages, radio, and television; new cultural demands, such as touring and making recordings, performing for tourists not well acquainted with the Gaelic arts; and new methods of learning culture, such as formal lessons and the use of recorded or written material, all pose challenges to the strong social context of the Gaelic cultural arts but have not yet succeeded in overwhelming it. However, there are worrying signs, and the decline of Gaelic, and the subsequent narrowing of the cultural store from which tradition-bearer/performers can draw from today, is of the greatest and most immediate concern.

Religion and Gaelic Folk Culture

The type of folk society that has been described here existed wherever Gaels settled, regardless of whether they came from the mainland Highlands or from the islands or from the eastern, western, northern, or southern corners of the Scottish *Gàidhealtachd*. In terms of cultural expression, there existed a common core of material that seemed popular throughout Gaelic Scotland, as well as a strong tradition of local creativity. A Gael from one part of the Highlands would not be very much adrift in another district and the same was true for the Nova Scotian *Gàidhealtachd*. The only factor that appears to have significantly differentiated Gaelic communities from one another on both sides of the Atlantic was their religious affiliation, and that was a very modern change.

It is abundantly apparent from the earliest accounts of the immigrant community in Nova Scotia that, taken as a whole, religious affiliation did not greatly differentiate Gaelic settlers at that time — certainly not as much as it would later. Indeed, it is rather humorous to read the accounts of Presbyterian evangelists, such as Reverend MacGregor of Pictou County, with their evident concern that Presbyterian Highlanders were so unorthodox in their religious observations and so deeply attached to the "superstitions" and "profane and worldly" pastimes of their culture that mass conversion to Catholicism was expected at any moment; while at the same time, Catholic church officials, such as Bishop Plessis of Quebec, were touring through the same districts expressing their exasperation at the equally unorthodox practices of Scottish Catholics, which Bishop Plessis dismissed as "Scoticisms." Both men, it should be noted, however, felt that their respective flocks were sincere and enthusiastic in their spirituality but somewhat lacking in instruction.

As church structures became better established, Gaels became more orthodox in their religious practices within their respective churches and began to draw apart from one another, and conversions and exogamous marriages appear to have become less common. Relations between Protestant and Catholic Gaels in Scotland prior to the emigration era have been widely described as excellent, and evidence from the early years of settlement in Nova Scotia supports this claim. However, the evangelical revivals of the 19th century produced a strong strain of often quite virulent anti-Catholicism, which has been credited with souring relations between the two religious groups for much of the second half of the 19th century and into the early 20th century. This level of open hostility never seems to have been particularly deeply seated in the Gaelic community, and older Gaels interviewed in the second half of the 20th century stressed that warm and cordial relations had always existed between the two groups during their lifetimes (Gibson 1998, 200; Campbell & MacLean 1974, 222). It is the case, however, that the important institution of the church fragmented, rather than united, Scottish Gaels and appears to have discouraged them from pursuing a unified program of social or cultural development in Nova Scotia (Mertz 1982, 209–210).

For the Gaelic cultural arts, the most important aspect of the religious divide was the degree to which increasing religious fundamentalism led to increasing repression of many important forms of Gaelic cultural expression. This was especially evident in Protestant communities where a series of evangelical "revivals" substantially changed the religious and social environment.

As far as the Gaelic language was concerned, this increasing orthodoxy had little impact. The Church of Scotland's once strongly anti-Gaelic stance had largely evaporated by the mid-18th century, and in some respects, there was a fuller opportunity for the use of Gaelic in the Presbyterian Church than in its Catholic counterpart, which had never articulated an anti-Gaelic policy. The Catholic Church used Latin as its ritualistic language, but Gaelic also had status within the formal church service and was used for sermons, prayers, and confessions. In the Protestant Churches, however, the service was generally conducted entirely through the medium of Gaelic. The most important Protestant denomination amongst Gaels was Presbyterianism, but there were also pockets of the Episcopal and Baptist faiths. In the 1920s, some Presbyterian churches became part of the new United Church. Protestant clerics developed a particularly rich and vigorous tradition of spiritual debate and oratory in Gaelic during the 19th century. Long, powerful sermons, extempore prayers, energetic debate on the day of the *ceist* (question), and marathon sessions of public worship during the annual communion week, where there might be several thousand in attendance at a sermon, became an important new part of Gaelic social culture in Protestant communities. These religious figures also greatly encouraged the evolution of a new or, perhaps, renewed Gaelic spiritual literature. Moreover, the Presbyterian Church's emphasis on home worship and the basic Protestant tenet of making devotional literature available in the native language of worshipers encouraged a much higher rate of Gaelic literacy among Protestants, allowing for fuller participation in this emerging genre of literature. A study conducted by Kenneth MacKinnon in Cape Breton in the 1970s revealed a Gaelic literacy rate of 52 per cent among Protestants as opposed to 17 per cent among Catholics (neither group had been taught Gaelic in school). (MacKinnon 1975, 5)

In most respects, there was little difference in the attitudes toward or use of Gaelic in the Protestant and Catholic churches in Nova Scotia. Both churches seemed to have made a strong effort well into the 20th century to have Gaelic-speaking clergy in Gaelic-speaking regions, but neither appears to have actively encouraged the use of Gaelic within the church or the community. There does seem to have been a greater tendency for the Catholic community to produce its own native clergy, which may have made it easier for it to find clerics who understood the local language and culture. There are numerous accounts of Presbyterian communities in Cape Breton struggling to acquire a Gaelic-speaking minister, but it is equally clear that the effort was made and often with success. Elizabeth Mertz pointed out that two of the strongest Gaelic-speaking regions in the province — Mabou (Catholic) and the North Shore (Protestant) — both lost their last Gaelic-speaking clerics in 1948. In actual fact, Gaelic is still used in Mabou and by several Gaelic-speaking priests in Cape Breton but generally only in special circumstances, such as at a funeral mass for a Gaelic speaker. However, Mertz's observation seems valid that the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Cape Breton appeared equally neutral regarding the Gaelic language, providing similar opportunities for its use and generally supplying Gaelic-speaking clergy while the congregations had high numbers of Gaelic speakers.

One interesting cultural difference between the Catholic and Protestant churches was in the use of music during divine services. In the 18th and 19th centuries, music was not used in the Presbyterian Church nor were hymns. However, there was a beautifully expressive tradition of Gaelic Psalm singing. A precentor sang out the first line of the Psalm, set to the air of a well-known song, after which he and the entire congregation repeated the line in chorus. The manner in which the members of the congregation interpreted and ornamented the musical line produced an eerily beautiful wave-like effect of no little power. This was a potent opportunity for Gaelic musical expression, unique to Protestant Gaelic churches. Sadly, this tradition fell into decline in Nova Scotia after the Second World War and is no longer practiced, although the strong tradition of Gaelic singing in Protestant areas lasted somewhat longer. There are good recordings of congregations engaged in Psalm singing in the Scottish Highlands, but none appear have survived from Nova Scotia when the tradition was still actively practised and at its fullest expression.

The Catholic Church, by contrast, did incorporate music and hymns into divine service but showed its strong classical leaning by deriving most of these from continental European music and from Latin hymnals. In the 18th and 19th centuries Gaelic music also appears to have been used in Nova Scotia, but this practice was severely cut back after 1903, when Pope Pius X promulgated the *Motu Proprio*, putting an end to "inappropriate" music in the Catholic mass (Gibson 1998, 203). Following Vatican II, however, that restriction was eased and Gaelic music once again re-entered the Catholic mass. Rev. Angus Morris, himself a respected traditional fiddler and the current parish priest of Mabou, reflected the generally positive attitude toward local Gaelic tradition that exists in the Catholic Church in Nova Scotia at present, explaining why Gaelic is featured in religious services, particularly special ceremonial occasions, such as weddings or funerals.

> It's difficult to separate our faith and culture, and music is a part of that. Look what our fiddlers have done at charitable affairs over the years — playing to support their church and faith. We have distinctly Scottish parishes in Cape Breton and the violin music and Gaelic songs these people are so familiar with should be adapted into the liturgy. (Rev. Angus Morris in MacGillivray, 1981: 156)

Where the two churches differed most significantly from the early 19th century on was in the treatment of Gaelic secular culture — the songs, stories, folk beliefs, and most especially, the music and dance pastimes of the Gaels. Regrettably, a vast array of Gaelic tradition was identified as sinful in this era of heightened religious sentiment and very actively discouraged, especially in Protestant communities. This dampening influence began to have a noticeable affect on Highland Scottish social culture by the early decades of the 19th century.

> Although around 1800 Munro the cathechist had railed against Gaelic instrumental music in Skye, the Reverend Roderick MacLeod was still preaching in the 1820s against the "seductive" effects of the bagpipes. MacLeod, who was ordained in the Church of Scotland at Bradacale in Skye, in 1823, remembered that in his boyhood at Dunvegan, "as soon as the services, which were conducted in the open field, were ended, three pipers struck up music, and three dancing parties were formed on the green." (Gibson 1998, 182)

At the opposite end of the Highlands, in Perthshire, which had been a focal point for the Golden Age of Scottish fiddling, the same process was in evidence before the 1820s, when the fiddling tradition also went into decline.

> Stewart of Garth sadly noted of Highlanders between 1782 and 1822 in Protestant communities that were familiar to him that "their taste for music, dancing, and all kinds of social amusement, has been chilled. Their evening meetings are now seldom held, and when they do occur, instead of being enlivened with the tale, the poem, or the song, they are too frequently exasperated with political or religious discussions." (Gibson 1998, 172)

Even in areas that resisted early repression, as in Skye above, or temporarily escaped it, as in mainland Argyll, below, the impression is that the reprieve was only a temporary one.

> A Gaelic bard who came to Canada, Ewan MacColl (1808–98) of Kenmore at the head of Loch Fyne, was raised in a traditionalist Church of Scotland community where the *céilidh* was beloved. Canadian Gael Alasdair Friseal reported MacColl as saying, "Playing the pipes and fiddling were really common around the head of Loch Fyne and no company were complete without a piper or a fiddler." Friseal went on to write:
>
> > Its ministers weren't looking gloomily on the diversions, the *ceilidh* or the shinty games of the men. This was before the time of the Gaelic schoolmasters sent out by the Edinburgh society to be broadcasting the Bible light in the *Gaidhealtachd* and to be teaching the people. These pious men set their faces harshly against the traditional practices that they condemned absolutely and upon which they fixed the mark of sin. They were men sincere in moral conduct, hard, unbending in their opinions and zealous for belief. With them came many changes to the people's lifestyle

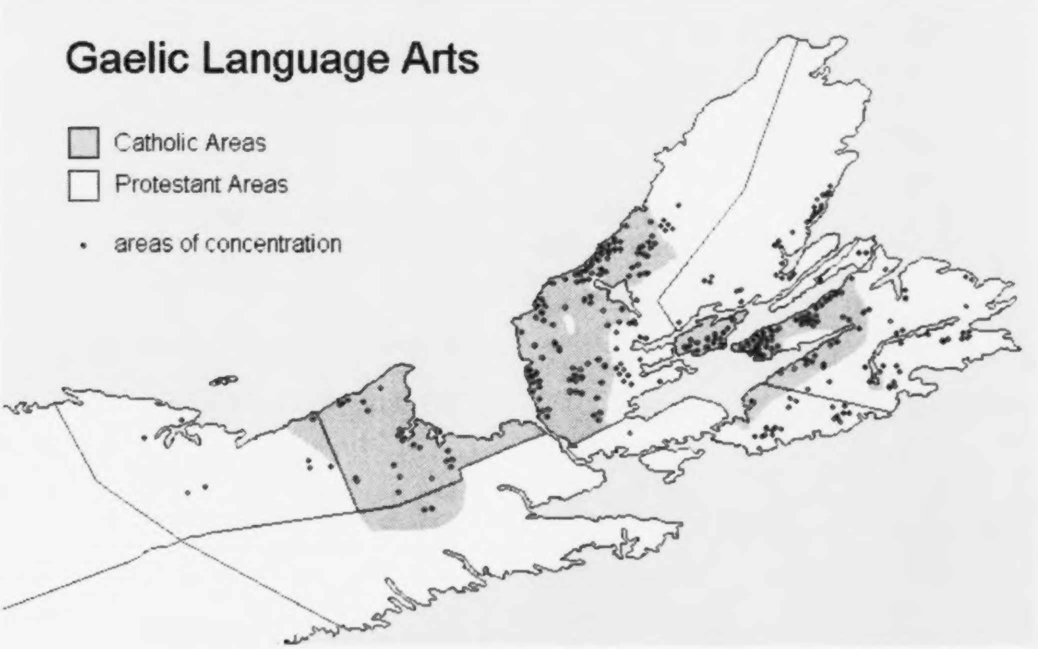
> but the Bard had grown up to young manhood before the new ideas got a bite on the place. (Friseal, *Leabhar nan Sonn*, translated by Gibson 173)

When the traditional Gaelic arts began to go into decline in Protestant communities in Nova Scotia is difficult to determine as such documentation is generally lacking, for the early to mid-19th century. Nova Scotia — and particularly Cape Breton — was not well supplied with Presbyterian ministers in the early 19th century, and so there was little in the way of an active evangelical movement to discourage old practices, although there were pockets of intense activity, such as Reverend MacGregor's work from Pictou. Probably due to a combination of a better supply of ministers and continuing immigration from areas of the Highlands that were being influenced by this change in attitude, it is evident that by the mid-19th century, religious fundamentalism was also becoming something of a force in Nova Scotia's Protestant Gaelic communities. It seems reasonable to assume that the greatest period of decline in the traditional Gaelic arts in Protestant areas, then, was from the second half of the 19th century. The oral tradition would suggest that the Gaelic musical arts, at least, had already been substantially repressed by the end of the 19th century, although there were always notable individuals who continued to buck the religious strictures.

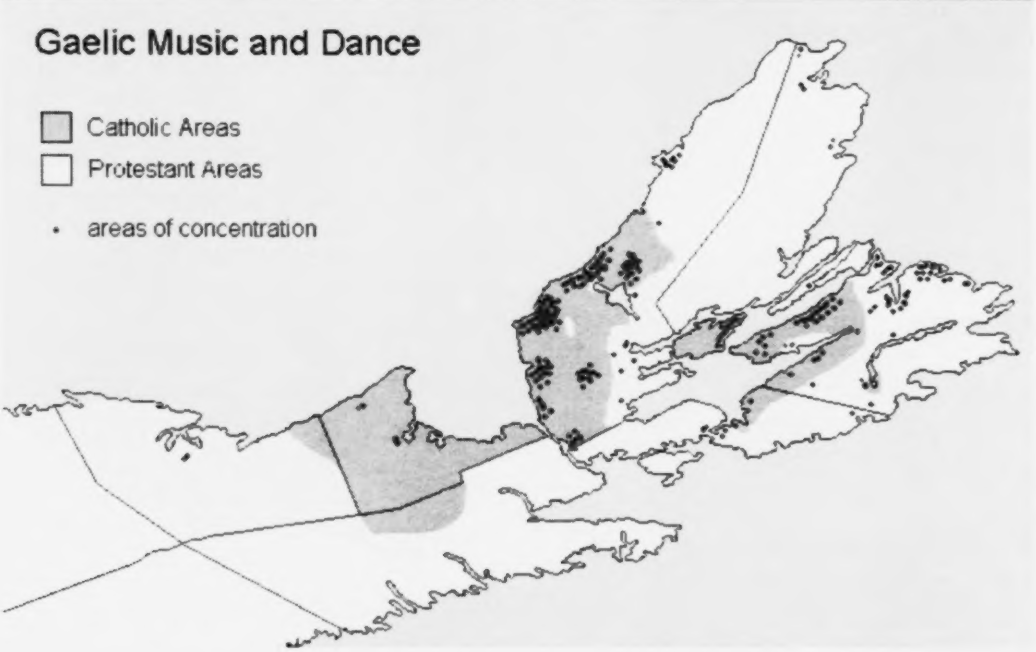
The decline of so many fundamental features of Gaelic tradition in the increasingly tightened-down cultural environment in Protestant communities began to erode the old shared cultural reference points between Catholics and Protestants. In so doing, it ultimately weakened the cultural environment as a whole in Nova Scotia but not to the same extent that it did in Scotland. The Catholic areas of Nova Scotia were extensive and more than large enough to maintain a healthy environment for these arts on their own, and it was in these districts that much of the Gaelic tradition that disappeared even from Scotland were maintained.

The degree to which the Gaelic cultural arts were undermined in Nova Scotia can be quite dramatically demonstrated with a distribution map of Gaelic tradition bearers, reaching back more than a century. To map this particular distribution, a database of more than 3,000 items was constructed. This included more than 2,000 Gaelic language arts items recorded for the Gaelic Folklore Project in the late 1970s and nearly 200 Gaelic bards culled from printed records over the last 100 years, as well as just under 1,000 traditional musicians and dancers taken from Allister MacGillivray's *The Cape Breton Fiddler* and *A Cape Breton Ceilidh*. It should be noted that this gives the database a bias towards Cape Breton rather than the Nova Scotian mainland, but this is in itself largely due to the greater survival of Gaelic cultural forms in Cape Breton. MacGillivray's works, for example, include all of Nova Scotia but use "Cape Breton" as the accepted term for Nova Scotia's Gaelic music. The areas detailed are the most homogeneous Gaelic settlement areas in the province.

The database and maps demonstrate that the Gaelic language arts of song, story, and lore have been fairly well represented throughout the Nova Scotian *Gàidhealtachd*, regardless of religious affiliation. There is a slightly better representation of these arts in Catholic communities, but what is more evident than any strong religious divide is the relative strength of Cape Breton compared to the mainland. Strength of Gaelic, rather than religious affiliation, was key to the survival of Gaelic language arts into the late 20th century.


Gaelic Language Arts
▨ Catholic Areas
☐ Protestant Areas
• areas of concentration

However, when the same assessment is made of the traditional Gaelic musical and dance arts, the impact of religious fundamentalism becomes immediately obvious.



The repression of Gaelic music and dance in Protestant Nova Scotia was thorough but by no means complete. The degree of hostility to these traditions varied from minister to minister from community to community, and from one period to another, but there is little doubt that tradition bearers in these districts faced much greater challenges than their Catholic counterparts. Censure was a widespread but often subtle obstacle. One such subtle obstacle was the lack of the all-important social context for the practice and transmission of their traditions, which was the long-term result of the negative environment that was engendered in the community at large, if not in every home. While Protestant communities continued to produce some of the very finest of tradition bearers of Gaelic music and dance in Nova Scotia, these were few in number, and they had little in the way of a public forum in which to learn, practice, or pass on their arts. One effective strategy Protestant tradition bearers commonly used to overcome this handicap was to socialize heavily with their Catholic neighbours where this context was readily available.

Today, there no longer exists any sort of church censure for the pursuit of the Gaelic musical arts in Protestant communities in Nova Scotia. However, the cultural momentum of past practice continues to have an effect, as prospective dancers and musicians in Protestant areas have far fewer tradition bearers and much less of a community dance or community concert tradition to draw from. A small survey of 68 individuals conducted by Jonathan Dembling in the 1980s, examining the practice of traditional Gaelic arts in two strong Gaelic regions — Christmas Island (Catholic) and the North Shore (Protestant) — gives an interesting snapshot of the continued effects of old religious divergence on the traditional Gaelic musical arts but also shows quite clearly that these musical arts were still practiced in Protestant communities in spite of the past history of censure. The numbers in the tables represent the percentage of individuals surveyed who grew up with the indicated art forms in their homes.

	Story	Song	Fiddle	Stepdance
North Shore	71%	74%	29%	18%
Christmas Island	80%	80%	47%	40%

Cultural Expression

A Language Community

In their 1974 study of the Scots in Nova Scotia, *Beyond the Atlantic Roar*, Campbell and MacLean stated that "[t]he most stabilizing influence of any culture, the very soul of its being, is language" (Campbell & MacLean 1974, 173). This is a claim that would have met with little dispute in the Gaelic immigrant community of Nova Scotia of the 18th and 19th centuries, although many today would find it poses something of a challenge to their sense of Highland Scottish identity. The structure of Gaelic society, although in some disarray when emigration to the New World was beginning, was sufficiently stable to provide a deeply rooted sense of Gaelic identity based on a common language culture. Traditional sources strongly demonstrate that whether referring to themselves as individuals, as members of a family, as members of a clan, as inhabitants of a region, as citizens of a nation, or as an ethnic group, the one common, unifying strand of identity was Gaelic.

Lochaber was not Lewis nor was Scotland Ireland, but the common cultural reference points were strong enough to give a sense of a shared, distinctive culture. As Scots, Gaels saw their language and culture as the historical raison d'être for the nation as a whole and as its most important source for a unique Scottish identity, in spite of its retreat from the Scottish Lowlands. As a larger ethnic group, Scottish Gaels viewed the Irish as close kinsmen, bound to them by their shared Gaelic language, heritage, and ancestry. Evidence of a wider "Celtic" identity shared with the Welsh, Cornish, or Bretons, or of a "British" identity reflecting their official status of citizenship in the United Kingdom came more unevenly with anglicization and the decline of this thoroughly Gaelic world view.

The destruction of the Gaelic educational system and the subsequent loss of classical Gaelic, the common literary language of Gaelic Scotland and Ireland, was one of the first significant assaults on the shared Gaelic heritage of Ireland and Scotland and, by extension, the shared sense of identity. Scottish and Irish Gaelic emerged from the same rootstock but were entirely separate languages by the time Gaels were emigrating to the New World and probably had been for many centuries before then. Even within Ireland differences in dialect were significant enough to make fluent intelligibility somewhat challenging across certain regional boundaries. This, allied with the increasingly rapid anglicization of Gaelic Ireland during the emigration era, played an important part in slowly (but not completely) eroding the sense of a shared culture and heritage between Scots and Irish.

While there are examples of Scots and Irish interacting in Nova Scotia through their respective Gaelic languages, they are rare. By the time of migration to the New World, English had made much deeper inroads with the Irish and that helped prevent the re-emergence of any larger mutually inclusive Scottish-Irish Gaelic cultural zone in the New World, despite the large representation of the two groups and their common heritage. Anglicization also eventually helped orient the Scottish Gaelic identity towards Lowland Scotland and the British Empire, further eroding that larger sense of Gaelic identity, but the process was slow, very uneven, and never effectively completed. At the time of emigration, it was particularly weak. However, the two communities had become too fragmented to offer each other any significant mutual cultural support, and meaningful cultural interaction appears to have been extremely limited in Nova Scotia.

Unlike their Irish counterparts, the Highlanders who settled in Nova Scotia during the 18th and 19th centuries, with relatively few exceptions, came from thoroughly Gaelic-speaking districts. Moreover, problems of mutual intelligibility amongst speakers of Scottish Gaelic were not at all significant. The dialect spoken in the Isle of Lewis and in parts of Sutherland where Norse linguistic influence lingered presented some difficulty, but even that was comparatively slight and focused mainly on pronunciation rather than on deeper linguistic structures. In any case, settlement from those districts was limited to areas of Pictou County and the North Shore region of Cape Breton's Victoria County. Fluent intelligibility in Nova Scotia was further aided by the fact that most Highland immigrants came from western Inverness-shire and to a much lesser extent from Ross-shire and the northern districts of Argyll, both of which immediately bordered on Inverness-shire. Dialectical variation was evident in that region of Scotland but relatively slight. For Scottish Gaels in the Highlands and in Nova Scotia, there were few linguistic bars to communication, to cultural sharing, or to the regeneration of a standard literary language based on vernacular speech and oral literature.

The Gaelic linguistic scene in Nova Scotia was a healthy blend of cohesion and diversity, conservatism and innovation. The strongly community-oriented migration pattern re-established several broad dialect areas in the province, and a certain degree of chauvinism (for most considered their own dialect to be the best) and lively localism ensured their survival to the present day. In spite of the fact that the language has declined massively — 99 per cent in the 20th century alone — there has not been a corresponding decline in dialect strength or, indeed, in the quality of linguistic expression, generally. Although there have been some casualties, dialects may still be encountered from Barra, Harris, Lewis, Lochaber, Moidart, Morar, North Uist, and South Uist with a few other smaller survivals, and those who speak the dialects speak them very well. Ronnie Campbell of Glen Roy, Lochaber, recounted his utter amazement at meeting a group of visitors from Mabou in the 1970s, all of whom spoke Lochaber Gaelic, in spite of the fact that their ancestors had emigrated nearly two centuries earlier (*Am Bràighe*, Summer 1993). Similarly, on his first visit to Scotland several years ago, Gaelic singer Rod C. MacNeil of Barra Glen, Cape Breton, recalled being asked by a native of Barra how long he had been away. The response, "two hundred years" was undoubtedly not the answer his questioner had been expecting (Conversation: Rod C. MacNeil, 2000).

Nova Scotia not only provided a good environment for linguistic conservatism but also for innovation. Because there were no effective barriers to communication across dialects in the province, new concepts that had been incorporated into the language could move very quickly from one district to the next. This process was aided by the inclusion of Gaelic in the local newsprint media, in papers such as the Antigonish *Casket* or *MacTalla* out of Sydney. Even a cursory review of Nova Scotian Gaelic literature reveals that an impressive new vocabulary was evolving to describe New World experience, including the physical environment, weather, technical and industrial matters, and many other phenomena. While some academic work has been done on Gaelic dialects in Nova Scotia by scholars such as the late Professor Kenneth Jackson of the University of Edinburgh, Dr. Joseph Watson of the Institute of Irish Studies, University College Dublin, and Dr. Ken Nilsen, of St. Francis Xavier University, far less effort has been expended in analyzing language innovation in Nova Scotia. This is unfortunate considering the efforts currently being made in Scotland to help the language modernize its vocabulary and develop neologisms to describe the new phenomena with which it will have to cope as it begins to re-enter domains of life from which it has long been excluded.

The major language-based arts in Nova Scotia's Gaelic communities include song (poetry), and *seanchas*, a term meaning "old ways" or "tradition" and frequently used to refer to tales, history, genealogy, and lore. The term *seanchas* is itself a testament to the integrated nature of Gaelic cultural expression. These language arts were well distributed throughout Gaelic Nova Scotia, revealing no significant differences based on religion or Old World affiliation. They are the most distinctively Gaelic traditions and, not surprisingly, show the highest correlation of all the Gaelic arts with the core areas of Gaelic linguistic strength in the province this century. They are also the forms of cultural expression under the most immediate threat of extinction.

Gaelic Song

In the Gaelic tradition, song and poetry are one and the same, and observers have been noting the intense love Gaels have for this tradition for hundreds of years. In the late 17th century, Martin Martin observed that Highlanders,

> ... have a great genius for music ... several of both sexes have a quick vein of poesy, and in their language (which is very emphatic) they compose rhyme and verse, both of which powerfully effect the fancy. (Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Isles*, c. 1695, published, 1703)

Helen Creighton made a similarly revealing observation in late 20th-century Nova Scotia.

> When I collected songs in Gaelic I wondered why the singers looked so much more ecstatic than the singers of songs in English on the Nova Scotia mainland, but after reading the MacLeod translations I understood. For their songs are filled with love of countryside and praise of lovely lasses (Creighton 1979: preface).

Three hundred years and 3,000 miles of ocean separate the worlds described by Martin Martin and Helen Creighton, but it is clear that neither the passage of time nor the change of location have diminished the ability of Gaelic songs to "powerfully effect the fancy." When the Gaelic Folklore Project was completed in the early 1980s, fully 60 per cent of all the oral tradition gathered in Nova Scotia's Gaelic communities was in the form of song.

The roots of the Gaels' affection for song are deep and ancient, stretching back to the elite Gaelic poetic structures of the Dark Ages and beyond. At a time when formal learning was the sole purview of clerics throughout most of early medieval Europe, the *Gàidhealtachd* was unique in also having a distinct bardic tradition of formal education. Some scholars have questioned whether these poet-scholars may have invented verse, as we understand it today. When this formal system finally began to collapse with the destruction of the old Gaelic social order and system of Gaelic education in the 17th century, Gaelic song became virtually the sole purview of the oral tradition once again, and it is largely in that form that the large repertoire of Gaelic songs has been passed down over the last 300 years or more.

The Nova Scotia Gaelic song tradition is vastly rich. The "big songs," songs crafted by master poets, often several centuries ago, with complex poetry and "deep hard" Gaelic, have been the most highly prized by Gaels in Nova Scotia; indeed, so much so that when a popular Gaelic singing group from Scotland performed in Nova Scotia several decades ago, older Gaels indicated their appreciation for the Scottish group's efforts but noted the absence of their favourite genre by simply expressing disappointment that no "songs" had been sung.

Gaels not only soaked in the poetry and imagery of these songs but used them as a living dictionary, citing poetic usages from various of the great songs to explain subtle differences in the nuance of word meanings and the proper use of grammar and idiom. Accounts of farmers and fishermen stopping an important job to make an observation concerning poetry or of lumbermen lying on the floor of shanties, drinking moonshine after an exhausting day of work, and reciting poems deep into the night, gives some sense of the depth of love for Gaelic song and for its wide distribution throughout Nova Scotia's Gaelic society. The increasing lack of Gaelic linguistic competence in Nova Scotia today makes these the most threatened of the Nova Scotian Gaelic song repertoire, and they are now only rarely heard.

Besides the "big songs", there exists a wide variety of other types of song, as well. There is particularly strong affection in Nova Scotia for work songs, probably very largely due to the highly social atmosphere that surrounds them. The most important body of these are "milling songs", highly rhythmic songs that were used to accompany the work of milling or "fulling" freshly woven woolen cloth by repeatedly beating the wet cloth to shrink it slightly and make it more air tight and to raise a nap to aid in dyeing. Milling songs usually have fairly short verses, which are sung by one individual, while the others engaged in beating the cloth in time to the rhythm of the songs join in on the choruses. Milling had once been solely the domain of women and the associated song repertoire gives an interesting insight into women's concerns stretching back over more than three centuries. In Nova Scotia, however, men became actively involved in the process of milling, and a large number of other types of songs were adapted to the repertoire as well.

Although milling is no longer done for the practical purpose of preparing cloth, "milling frolics" are one of the most popular forms of sharing Gaelic songs in Nova Scotia. The frolic has the benefit of being a highly enjoyable activity for the singers and an enjoyable activity even for non-Gaelic speaking observers who generally find the highly rhythmic and highly musical style of singing less challenging than the more content-rich and poetic-oriented style of many of the "big songs." The warm reception given the North Shore Gaelic Singers at several folk festivals in the United States in the 1960s demonstrated the remarkable ability of this tradition to cross cultural barriers. The milling frolic provides a potent opportunity for direct interaction between Gaelic speakers and Gaelic learners, as well as those who are merely curious and eager to participate, since older Gaelic singers always make room at the milling table for anyone wishing to try their hand at singing the choruses.

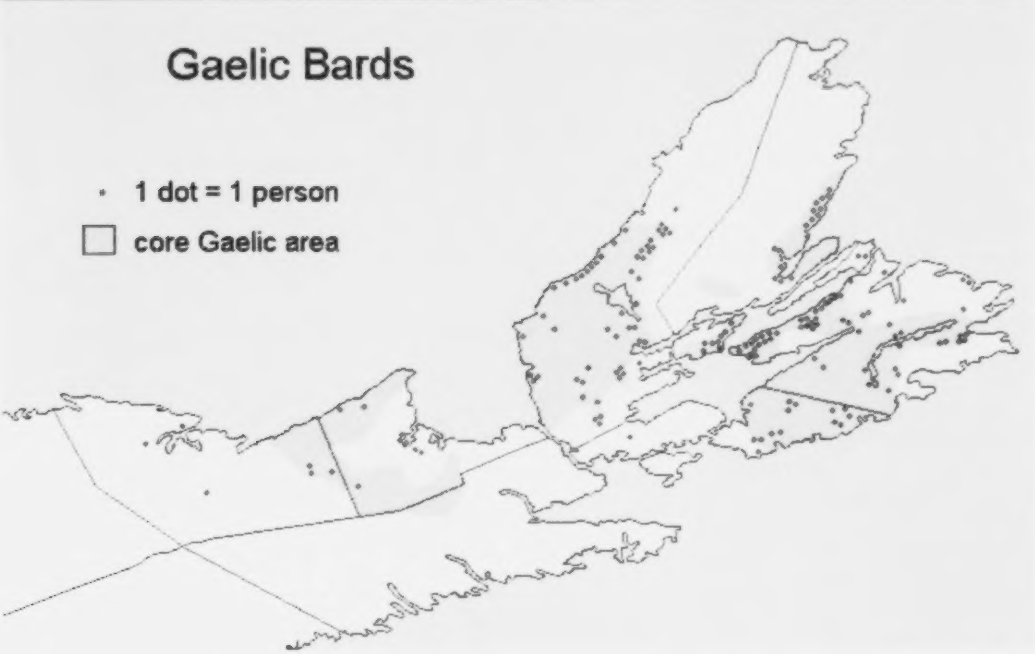
In most instances, milling frolics are put on in the fashion of a small concert, with the audience generally surrounding the millers, and are often followed by a dance or some other activity or are put on as part of a series of Gaelic workshops. However, the Schooner Restaurant at Margaree Harbour has been featuring stand-alone Tuesday night milling sessions for several summers now. In these, a Gaelic facilitator, usually accompanied by a small number of other Gaelic singers and/or learners, takes interested visitors through Gaelic song choruses before inviting them to take part as the songs are sung. To date, it has been highly successful.

Another interesting song genre is *puirt a beul* (mouth music), which is essentially the sung version of the Gaelic instrumental music repertoire. Many violinists and pipers learned their first tunes from hearing their mothers sing *puirt a beul* or "jig tunes" — the latter, a less formal, non-language-specific form of reproducing instrumental music orally. *Puirt a beul* songs are often humorous and nonsensical and were frequently sung in a string, one after another, mimicking the fiddle and pipe tradition. Occasionally, they were used to supplement the fiddle when extra volume was needed for dancing and were occasionally used to supply tunes for dancing all on their own. They were once very common and played an important role in musical cultural transmission but were not considered poetry in the same fashion as the "big songs", since their literary qualities were generally very low. *Puirt a beul* is proving particularly popular with Gaelic learners, because it is based on a lively instrumental music that is still easily accessible and, therefore, relatively easily learned; because the songs are generally very short, holding the attention of the learner/performer and the non-Gaelic speaking audience; and because it does not make the same heavy demands of linguistic competence and understanding made by the "big songs."

In addition to their love of singing songs and faithfully passing them on (sometimes for hundreds of years), Nova Scotian Gaels also had a remarkable tradition of song making. Song was one of the chief means they used to describe important events in their lives, from emigration and settlement to love and loss, and to celebrate their lives and their communities in Nova Scotia. Virtually anything was considered a legitimate excuse to compose a song, from the celebration of a marriage to the appearance of blister on the hand. The poetry was characteristically direct and intimate but could range from warmly humorous to bitingly satirical, from earthy to delicate, and from light hearted to deeply moving.

The quality of composition varied extensively with wide participation in the art and with a wide range of song genres. Master poets such as the Bard MacLean, Malcolm H. Gillis, and the "Ridge" MacDonalds worked alongside countless poets whose fame was more fleeting, and all tackled subjects of greater and lesser importance. Some of the better poets were noted not only for the high quality of their craft but for their ability to compose extemporaneously, even while holding a conversation on the topic they were in the process of versifying. The facility for composing songs in Nova Scotia's Gaelic community was quickly made evident to a linguist visiting the province in the 1970s to gather Gaelic material for the University of Glasgow. While en route to Cape North from Sydney, he stopped by the roadside to put up the top of his convertible and was attacked by a swarm of mosquitoes, which he roundly cursed in Gaelic. A few days later while attending a ceilidh he found himself recording a Gaelic song about his battle with the bugs.

Virtually every district had a respected local bard in addition to the many who made less frequent attempts at versification. A brief survey of printed sources in Nova Scotia revealed the names and home communities of 168 respected Gaelic poets. Their correlation is again very strong with the core rural Gaelic regions of this century (based on the 1901 census identification of predominantly Gaelic-speaking communities), with good distribution throughout the Nova Scotian *Gàidhealtachd* and a notable strength in the Barra–South Uist settlement zone from Iona to Boisdale in central Cape Breton.



As with other forms of cultural expression, Gaelic song was tightly woven into the fabric of life in Gaelic Nova Scotia. John Shaw noted in the Nova Scotian Gaelic song tradition,

> … a strong element of social cohesion, illustrated by anecdote and legend and supporting a repertoire of considerable force and appeal, but it would be misleading to view the Gaelic song of the region — or Gaelic culture in general — as being romantic in the sense that it belongs to a "vanished world of integrated emotion and natural feeling which we have lost" (Finnegan 1977, 259) – or indeed romantic in any other sense ... [F]rom the period of settlement until our lifetime, the daily routine involved more than its share of exhausting physical work, insecurity, and setbacks, along with social and cultural repression. Song … was one way open to Gaelic society to deal with what was never a comfortable situation (MacLellan and Shaw 2000: XXIII).

The performance aesthetic for Gaelic song was similar to that of the other Gaelic arts; any opportunity might be taken for song, but the setting was likely to be fairly intimate and informal. Sharing rather than "performing" was more characteristic of this type of environment, but there were still clearly recognized standards for song presentation.

> As to what constitutes a good Gaelic song in traditional terms, the criteria of ease in singing, quality of the poetry, and the air are referred to frequently, but the primary factor mentioned was "the essence of the song" (*brigh an òrain*). The subject matter of the song is considered to be a story, something which occurred "a wedding or battle or death, that was the story to be told." ... The criteria of performing the "essence of a song" extend to the concept of what is desirable in a singer and in a performance. To be sure, a good singing voice ranks high among

> the requirements: what ranks higher still with the traditional audience is the ability for the singer to understand and express the central proposition in the song itself. As one performer put it, "Mar a b'fheàrr a thuigeadh iad a h-uile sian, bha iad a' faighinn a bharrachd as an obair" — "The better they understood everything in a song the more they derived from their effort." (John Shaw, "Gaelic Cultural Maintenance: The Contribution of Ethnography": 5–6)

Unfortunately, Gaelic song has not only had to contend with a declining speech community but also with a powerful challenge to its repertoire and performance aesthetic. The first challenge came from 19th-century musical "improvers," intent on helping Gaels make their musical traditions more respectable in mainstream society. Ironically, one of the most important of the "improving" forces was the Gaelic Mòd, set up by *An Comunn Gaidhealach* in 1891 to promote Gaelic culture. The Mòd was based in the urban centres of the Scottish Lowlands and heavily influenced by the musical tastes of polite drawing room society of the late Victorian age. The entire event was conducted through the medium of English, and the Mòd spared no effort in encouraging the adoption of quasi-operatic singing styles with pianoforte accompaniment or, occasionally, the accompaniment of the newly revived harp. It would take 100 years for the Mòd to develop a category for "traditional" singers. One critic complained about the ruination that was being visited upon Gaelic song in Scotland thanks to the cultural inferiority complex that surrounded the Gaelic Mòd:

> … half apologetically, some curious writer gives us one of these songs of our fathers popularised to suit the taste of the English. These we in Scotland learn readily enough once they are stamped with the London music hall mark (*Oban Times* 14 September 1895: 13)

Songs were adjusted to fit more closely into the mould dictated by the dominant English-speaking society. Songs with subject matter that was considered unacceptable for Victorian tastes were either not published or were edited or deliberately mistranslated. Only versions suitably cleansed in this fashion found their way into the Mòd program. The music of the songs was corrupted even more severely than the words. If the Gaelic rhythm of a song was not suitable for the prescribed accompaniment, the rhythm was simply changed. Similarly, if the mode of the song made accompaniment demanding or challenged the ear of those accustomed to a different musical scale, the Gaelic mode was also changed. Individual interpretation and ornamentation were discouraged, and metres and airs were regularized and harmonized, all of which conspired against the creativity of the older Gaelic tradition.

The whole process was problematic, as even sensitive attempts to note songs resulted in distortion. Efforts to produce standardized, authoritative versions of any particular song for publication or to encourage choral singing, a favourite of the late 19th-century Victorian age (duly encouraged among Gaels by the Mòd), militated against the creative tradition of individual interpretation and improvisation that was the hallmark of the Gaelic singing and music tradition. Fr. Allan MacDonald, the famous turn-of-the-century folklorist from Eriskay, noted the dampening effect choral singing was having on the vitality of the Gaelic singing tradition even in the Outer Hebrides by the early 1900s.

> His face fell. It was a song the women used to be singing in the houses, he replied; a *Cradle-song of the Blessed Virgin*, that he had taken a fancy to hear sung in the chapel now and then ... "But they have spoiled it — do you hear how *plain* it is? But everyone had her own way of the tune, and no two the same — and how would it do for everyone to be putting in her own twists and turns? So the only way was to leave them *all* out. And now there isn't a woman on the island, so far as I know, who has the old way."
>
> And what he, in all good-will and piety, had wrought unwittingly on one, he saw — or thought to see — threatening all and sundry; and that through an endeavour no less well-meant the *Mòd* to wit.
>
> Like his own aim, that of this great yearly meeting on the mainland is the good and the long-life of the Highland song. Beginning some twenty years before, to this end were formed the Highland Choirs that are now to be found pretty well all over the Highlands and the Isles, and in such Lowland towns as Glasgow and Edinburgh, where are Highlanders. These use collections noted both on the staff and in Tonic Sol-Fa, with of course the twists and turns cut out ... "As though you were to fit a statue into a box by taking off the nose and ears," said Father Allan. (Amy Murray, *Father Allan's Island*, c. 1903: 88–90)

Due largely to a lack of appreciation of the depth of Nova Scotia's Gaelic tradition and its distinct values, attempts were also made to import the Mòd to Nova Scotia. In fact, it was suggested that the Scottish National Mòd itself be held in Nova Scotia for one year, but the idea was never carried through. Instead, the Scottish Mòd format was imported, usually by well-meaning urban-based institutions that were swept away by the romanticism of the Mòd's pageantry and that perhaps lacked the knowledge to appreciate the superiority of what they had available to them locally. Often a modern, direct Scottish influence was evident, such as that of Maj. C. I. N. MacLeod, who instituted a Gaelic Mòd in Pictou during his tenure as Gaelic advisor to the Department of Education and who almost certainly encouraged the adoption of the competitive Mòd format and its formal, classically influenced performance styles elsewhere in Nova Scotia.

It was telling that, in his assessment of the Gaelic cultural scene in Nova Scotia, MacLeod should complain that the lack of "trained or qualified local instructors, especially in Gaelic music" was "retarding development in certain rural areas." Rural areas were (and still are) the strongholds of the Gaelic music tradition in Nova Scotia, and the fact that there were no "trained" instructors from urban areas with the appropriate "qualifications" is a likely reason why. However, institutions with strong links to urban areas soon set about trying to change that state of affairs, and the most active of them was the Gaelic College at St. Ann's.

Almost from the very beginning the Gaelic College set up a competitive Gaelic Mòd on the Scottish model, requiring local tradition bearers to adapt to the imported standards. Respected local Gaelic singers took part in the Mòd but refrained from adopting the Mòd performance aesthetic or wearing the theatrical "Highland" costume, which seemed a prerequisite to a gold medal performance. A great deal can be learned from examining the contrasting images of the respected local traditional singer Malcolm F. MacLeod and the perennial gold medal winner of the Gaelic singing contest, Malcolm R. MacLeod of Sydney, taken from the 1943 Gaelic Mòd program.

The Mòd and its alien stylings never became popular in Nova Scotia despite the continued support it received from the Gaelic College and from several influential recent immigrants from Scotland, like C. I. N. MacLeod. Although some of the Mòd's song collections did find favour among traditional Gaelic singers as a means to learn new material, the singing tradition in rural communities carried on largely as it had done, maintaining the core of its old repertoire and aesthetic. The very few Gaelic choirs that did emerge in Nova Scotia, such as *Coisir an Eilein*, generally refrained from adopting harmony or other types of choral arrangements that conflicted with the fundamentals of the more traditional singing style. They were simply groups of individuals singing fairly traditionally but with the support of many voices.

The greatest threat to the Gaelic song tradition in Nova Scotia remained, quite simply, the declining number of Gaelic speakers. In spite of the greatly reduced number of singers active in the province today, most of whom are over the age of 60, there are a number of good younger singers in Cape Breton, and the tradition remains relatively strongly accessible. Singers are generally quite willing to share their tradition and are often in demand in community concerts. Organizers of the Mabou Céilidh thought that they would support Gaelic singing by putting on a milling frolic along with a craft fair in the school gym but soon were surprised to find that the milling frolic was drawing over 800 visitors over the course of the afternoon, in spite of the fact that it was in competition with an outdoor concert, outdoor children's activities, and a beer garden in the nearby rink. It turned out that Gaelic song was helping to attract people to view the local crafts on display rather than the other way around.

The Gaelic song tradition in Nova Scotia has been comparatively well documented and recorded, providing a clear example of the tradition as it has existed in Nova Scotia and offering a reasonably congenial avenue into the culture for learners. The number of Scottish Gaelic songs that have been published is huge, and some of the more important Scottish works, such as the 19th-century *Sar Obair nam Bàrd Gaelach* (The Master Works of the Gaelic Bards) were not only popular in Nova Scotia but reprinted here. In addition to the songs that they submitted to the Nova Scotian press, Nova Scotian Gaels were active publishing collections of Scottish Gaelic poetry, as well as Gaelic poetry composed in Nova Scotia. Collections such as *Smeorach nan Cnoc 's na Gleann, Bardachd a' Albainn Nuaidh, Beyond the Hebrides, The Gaelic Songs of Nova Scotia,* and *The Emigrant Experience* are only some of the titles that appeared throughout the 20th century. This tradition has carried on right through to the 21st century, with the recent appearance of *Brigh an Òrain (A Story in Every Song): The Songs and Tales of Lauchie MacLellan.*

A great many of Nova Scotia's Gaelic songs have also been audio and video recorded over the years. The early wax cylinder recordings of Helen Creighton and John Lorne Campbell in the 1930s are probably the earliest that have been identified, but also recordings were made in the 1940s, 50s and 60s (again by Helen Creighton) and by visiting folklorists from the United States and the United Kingdom. Among them are Laura Bolton, whose collection is housed at Indiana University, and Ralph Rintzler, whose collection is housed at the Smithsonian Institute but has been generously made available to institutions in Cape Breton, such as the University College of Cape Breton and the Gaelic College. The Gaelic Folklore Project at St. Francis Xavier University resulted in the collection of more than 1,100 songs in the 1970s and '80s by John Shaw. Numerous other individuals working on their own initiative have also left a legacy of excellent recordings. Private collections of Gaelic song sessions can be found from Vancouver to Boston and to Cape Breton, but to date no systematic effort has been made to identify, collect, and edit them. The best large collections of Gaelic song are now archived at St. Francis Xavier University and at the Beaton Institute Archive at University College of Cape Breton. Sadly, free access to this material is limited.

In more recent years, commercial recordings have also become available. Some, such as *The Gaelic Tradition in Cape Breton* (two volumes) John Shaw's and Rosemary MacCormack's *A Tribute to the North Shore Singers* or *Or Cheap Breatuinn (Cape Breton Gold)*, are based on field recordings of traditional singers and musicians. Others, such as Mary Jane Lamond's commercial releases, *Bho Thir nan Craobh*, *Suas e*, *Làn Dùil*, or *Orain Ghàidhlig*, provide a more modern presentation of the Gaelic song repertoire that has earned cross-over acceptance in the pop music industry. The recording of songs has not only left us with a valuable store of material, it has had, as one scholar noted when discussing a gifted Nova Scotian tradition bearer, Lauchie Dan N. MacLellan, "the effect of revalidating a culture which during his entire lifetime had been routinely undervalued by the agencies representing power, progress, and enlightenment, …" (Lauchie Dan N. MacLellan and John Shaw, 2000: XX)

Workshops are now proving a popular way of introducing more people to Gaelic songs and encouraging their transmission. Students are introduced to the Gaelic song tradition, its importance as a literary form, the various song genres that existed, sometimes some of the qualities of the poetry, the process of composition, and other important aspects of performing and passing on songs in Nova Scotia. A lead instructor usually teaches participants a selection of songs, sometimes with the assistance of tradition bearers from the community, and usually includes material from the milling frolic repertoire since that is the most active and accessible format for public singing for learners in Nova Scotia. A milling frolic, in which local singers and learners take part, is generally held to end the day. A good example of such a program is *Baile nam Fonn* (Village of Music) hosted by Gaelic recording artist Mary Jane Lamond at the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum.

While the song tradition is threatened by the decline of Gaelic, it may have a strong role to play in supporting the language in Nova Scotia. Gaelic song has crossed the Gaelic-English cultural barrier fairly well — certainly far better than any of the other language arts — and it has an undeniable appeal for those who are interested in accessing the culture, especially for the young. A creative use of Gaelic song in the school system, perhaps based on the *Feis* model (which will be discussed later) could have impressive results.

(Students at Rankin Memorial School "milling" the cloth with the Iona Gaelic Singers, during *Feis a' Gheamhraidh (The Winter Gaelic Festival)*, 2001; photo courtesy of Rodney Chaisson, Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum)

Gaelic Prose

Gaels brought to Nova Scotia a diverse body of material in prose form — history, mythology, genealogy, lore, and prose literature — often of extraordinary antiquity. The quality of that store may be gathered from the assessment offered by folklorist MacEdward Leach who recorded material in Nova Scotia in the 1950s.

> Cape Breton was settled by a superior people who came from a rich cultural background of story, poetry and song. The beauty, the imaginative power, the dramatic quality, the richness of detail of the old Celtic lore is unsurpassed in Western Europe. (*Am Bràighe*, 1994: 5)

Observers have not always been so kind to Gaelic literary tastes. In 1567, Bishop Carswell's Gaelic translation of the *Book of Common Order* was printed, ushering in the Protestant Reformation in Gaelic Scotland. It was the first Gaelic book ever printed, and it referred to the then-existing body of Gaelic prose literature as "vain, lying, hurtful, worldly stories." Up until this time, the oral tradition was the main medium throughout Europe for the passing on of such narrative tales, but the relatively new technology of the printing press was about to make the publishing of such literature an affordable and convenient possibility. Unfortunately, as Bishop Carswell's disparaging remarks revealed, the institutional environment that was developing in Scotland was not especially supportive of its own body of Gaelic literature at this critical time. It found its most favourable environment "underground" as an oral folk literature rather than as a literary or institutional art form.

Medieval Gaelic manuscripts — particularly from c.1100 to c.1400 — show that the body of Gaelic prose literature currently transmitted in the oral tradition was written down at an early date. These manuscript versions appear to have been redactions of oral tradition — distilled versions of the tales then current in society. The manuscript versions seem to be bare outlines that were to be fleshed out by the storyteller as he read aloud in the halls of the chieftains. Such a literate tradition would have existed beside its oral counterpart, and it seems fairly clear that the tales as we have them today are largely the product of this latter means of transmission. There is some evidence to suggest that manuscript forms of tales were still to be found in the Highlands into the early 1700s, but with the decline of Gaelic elite culture in the preceding century, it is doubtful that many Gaels could have read and understood these manuscripts even at that time. In any event, these tales continued to be passed on for the next 300 years without the benefit of this manuscript tradition, and the high degree of correspondence between these oral tales, which have survived down to the present, and the written tales of the medieval manuscripts nearly 1,000 years earlier gives some sense of the highly conservative nature of the Gaelic oral tradition.

To maintain the integrity of tales passed down through oral sources for centuries, Gaelic society had to have a robust cultural mechanism for the transmission of its literary treasures. Remarkable memory skills were an important feature of that mechanism of cultural transmission and were heavily relied upon in the prose tradition. One informant in Ireland, for example, was able to recite perfect versions of tales that were equivalent in length to five PhD theses — 500,000 words or approximately 2,500 pages of text. And, as with other aspects of the oral tradition, retentiveness of memory was matched by facility in acquiring new material. Many of the best storytellers in the Gaelic tradition needed to hear a story only once to have it in its complete form.

Allied to the skill of the individual storyteller was a supportive environment that not only offered a forum for the constant use of the skill but also brought to bear the assistance of many minds in the maintenance and transmission of cultural material. To a certain extent, a Gaelic storyteller was not an individualistic creative artist performing for a largely passive audience, but a tradition bearer with a store of material from the community's collective intellectual or artistic heritage interacting with a highly informed and often very active group of listeners. In this respect, Gaelic "artists" differ quite dramatically with what are generally considered "artists" today. Songs, lore, tales, tunes, dances, and discussion all intermingled in these settings, forging important contextual links that gave fullness to the various traditions and aided accurate transmission.

All members of Gaelic society shared in a common cultural tradition. Those assembled in the ceilidh house contributed actively by "performing" or passively by supplying missing information (perhaps a missing verse of a song), by making informed observation or, on rare occasions, by giving criticism. Discussion and even argument might take place and all would draw on their deep, shared fund of tradition to make their points. Storytellers worked in a rich cultural milieu in which their traditions were constantly polished by performance, by informed criticism, and by rubbing up against other aspects of the folk tradition in the ceilidh houses. John Francis Campbell of Islay's brief account of the story telling tradition in the 19th-century Scottish Highlands revealed that tradition bearers in one genre were usually well versed in the other forms of cultural expression then current in their society. This was an important feature of the Gaelic folk tradition that was transplanted to Nova Scotia:

> I find that men of all ranks resemble each other; that each branch of popular lore has its own special votaries, as branches of literature have amongst the learned; that one man is the peasant historian and tells of the battles of the clans; another, a walking peerage, who knows the descent of most of the families in Scotland, and all about his neighbours and their origin; others are romancers, and tell about the giants; others are moralists, and prefer the sagacious prose tales, which have a meaning, and might have a moral; a few know the history of the Feni [Fenians], and are antiquarians. Many despise the whole as frivolities; they are the practical moderns, and answer to practical men in other ranks of society.
>
> But though each prefers his own subject, the best Highland story-tellers know specimens of all kinds. Start them, and it seems as if they would never stop. I timed one, and he spoke for an hour without pause or hesitation, or verbal repetition. His story was Connall Gulban, and he said he could repeat fourscore. He recited a poem, but despised "Bardism"; (John Francis Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, Edinburgh, 1860: 34)

Gaelic storytellers, like other tradition bearers, were proud, conscious literary artists, but they were not merely entertainers; their active contributions and the important social setting and interaction with other community members played an important role in shaping the intellectual life of their communities, as Gaelic folk collector John Shaw described in Nova Scotia:

> The first story learnt by many Gaelic speaking children until recently, *Biorachan Beag 's Biorachan Mor*, is an effective exercise in using a chain of causality to train young children in oral memory skills. The large riddle literature encourages verbal lateral thinking, stressing the need to examine things from various standpoints to come up with a creative solution. Folktales contain an important

> didactic component, being closely allied with social strategies and life plans for those living within a given society. Looking at the deep structure of stories, researchers have found that they not only embody fundamental paradigms of the culture but often express the "primitive" societies' concepts of universal truths which have served as guides, conscious and otherwise, to reciters and listeners throughout their lifetimes. (John Shaw, "Gaelic Cultural Maintenance: The Contribution of Ethnography": 9)

In the absence of a formal education system based in their own language and culture, Gaels used the storytelling tradition not only to entertain but also to teach. Stories covered a wide variety of topics. John Francis Campbell claimed that by far the most common tales were mythology, history, and genealogy relating to the clans and the local history of each district. However, there were also tales of wider mythological interest, tales with morals, children's tales, humorous tales, and on and on. Gaels analyzed aspects of life that could never be more than imperfectly understood through their many tales and traditions of the supernatural and through their oldest body of literature, the semi-historical Hero and Wonder cycles, which introduced Gaelic mythology, tracing the development of Gaelic society back through time into Celtic prehistory. Stories such as *Bas Cu-Chulain* (The Death of Cu-Chulain) are so ancient in their origins that they provide a window not only on the pagan, prehistoric world of Gaeldom but on the dawn of society in Western Europe, as well.

The best storytellers had a repertoire that included long, complex tales of great antiquity, requiring a sophisticated understanding not only of language but also of shared cultural reference points on the part of both storyteller and audience. A single tale from this body of lore could be several nights in the telling, and evidence suggests that such tales were considered to be the jewels in the Gaelic storytelling tradition. The "Fenian" or "Ossianic" tales were the most highly prized, recounting the feats of the semi-mythological heroes who defended the Gaelic world from the attacks of the Vikings and all other comers but also demonstrating elements from a much more distant, pre-Christian past.

> During the recitation of these tales, the emotions of the reciters are occasionally very strongly excited, and so also are those of the listeners, almost shedding tears at one time, and giving way to loud laughter at another. A good many of them firmly believe in the extravagance of these stories.
>
> They speak of Ossianic heroes with as much feeling, sympathy, and belief in their existence and reality as the readers of the newspapers do the exploits of the British army in the Crimea or in India; and whatever be the extravagance they recite respecting them, it is exceedingly remarkable that the same character is always ascribed to the same hero in almost every story and by almost every reciter. Fingal, or rather Fionn, is never called the king of any country or territory, but the king of the Finn, a body of men who were raised according to the traditions current in the Long Island and other parts of the Highlands, in Ireland

> and in the Highlands, to defend both countries against foreign invaders, more especially the Scandinavians. (Hector MacLean in J. F. Campbell: V)

John Shaw recounts that in the past Gaels treated the Fenian tales with such reverence that men would remove their bonnets when a tale from that cycle was being recited. Napoleon was reputed to have carried a copy of James MacPherson's semi-literary version of the Fenian tales into battle. These ancient tales were told in Cape Breton until very recently and at least one from this famous cycle — "*Mar a fhuair Osgair a' bhean*" (How Oscar got his wife) — is still known and can be recited by Patrick MacEachern of Glendale, *Pàdraig Aonghais Iain 'ic Dhòmhnaill 'ic Phàdraig Bhain 'ic Raghnaill* (Patrick, son of Angus, son of John, son of Donald, son of Fair-haired Patrick, son of Ronald). Although both men and women told stories, the Fenian tales seemed to have been considered the purview of the men.

Unfortunately, the complexity of these tales and the particular approbation they received from the new English-speaking elite intent on imposing new mythologies and standards of acceptable behaviour have led to their virtual disappearance after roughly a thousand years of existence. They have effectively disappeared from the social life of Nova Scotia and the Scottish Highlands. They appear to have been among the first casualties in the general decline of Gaelic storytelling, a decline that was evident as early as a century and a half ago. In his introduction to *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, John Francis Campbell of Islay aptly revealed the unusual fragility that even such highly prized traditions could have in a society that was fractured as badly as Gaelic society was.

> Men and women of all ages could and did tell me stories, children of all sizes listened to them; and it was self-evident that people generally knew and enjoyed them. Elsewhere I had been told, that thirty or forty years ago, men used to congregate and tell stories; here, I was told, that they now spend whole winter nights about the fire listening to these old world tales. The clergy in some places, had condemned the practice, and there it had fallen into disuse; stories seemed to be almost exterminated in some islands, though I believe they were only buried alive; but in other places this harmless amusement is not forbidden; and there, in every cluster of houses, is some one man famed as "good at sgialachdan," whose house is a winter evening's resort. I visited these, and listened, often with wonder, at the extraordinary power of memory shown by untaught old men. (J. F. Campbell: XIX–XX)

Campbell's assistants, Hector MacLean, the schoolmaster at Ballygrant, Islay, and Hector Urquhart, the gamekeeper in Ardkinglas, Wester Ross, noted similar repression and decline in other districts:

> In North Uist and Harris these tales are nearly gone, and this, I believe, to be owing to reading, which in a manner supplies a substitute for them, partly to bigoted religious ideas, and partly to narrow utilitarian views. (Hector MacLean in J. F. Campbell: V–VI)

> The above is all I can at present readily call to mind of the way in which the evenings were spent in the Highlands thirty or forty years ago. The minister came to the village in 1830, and the schoolmaster soon followed, who put a stop in our village to such gatherings; and in their place we were supplied with heavier tasks than listening to the old shoe maker's fairy-tales. From that period till I collected the few in this collection, I have not heard a tale recited. (Hector Urquhart in J. F. Campbell: VI)

In Nova Scotia, the main threat to the survival of Gaelic tales has been the steady erosion of the storytelling environment. Fewer Gaelic speakers meant not only fewer of the great tradition bearers but also fewer opportunities for them to practice their art and fewer knowledgeable listeners — all critical pieces of the oral tradition that sustained these tales. As often happens, stories deeply rooted in one culture were not translated into the next, and very few of the traditional tales have come into English as a result. Humorous tales and tales of the supernatural are something of an exception to this.

Allied to the language loss and its impact has been the less rapid but still significant general decline of social life in rural communities with the advent of more passive forms of entertainment such as books, radios, television, and a host of others. Young people grew up in this environment with a declining command of the language and lacking the frequent exposure to the tales that was necessary for them to learn the important cultural reference points so that the stories could be fully understood. Traditional tales, particularly the longer and more complex tales that had formerly been so highly prized, became increasingly meaningless and, slowly but surely, began to fall away. Today, there are a number of tradition bearers who can still tell traditional tales, but opportunities for people to hear them are extremely rare, and a fluent command of the Gaelic language is an absolute necessity for meaningful interaction. A large body of humorous anecdotal tales has come over into English, and these types of narrative are an integral part of conversation and social life in Gaelic Nova Scotia, but there are rarely formalized opportunities to participate in this aspect of the storytelling tradition.

Despite the decline in the active oral tradition of storytelling in Gaelic Nova Scotia, Gaelic tales have been recorded and published, and this affords another opportunity to access the tradition. The appearance of *Grimm's Fairy Tales* in the mid-19th century inspired collectors throughout Europe to begin examining their own native oral traditions, and in Scotland that challenge was first taken up by John Francis Campbell of Islay — a remarkable renaissance man, immensely skilled in languages and intensely interested in the various ethnic folk traditions of Europe, which he described with his pen and his pencil and paintbrush. His published collection of traditional Gaelic tales from the mid to late 19th century revealed that one of the oldest and most complete oral narrative traditions in Europe had been preserved by Gaelic tradition bearers. His published work still represents the most extensive collection of Gaelic tales to have been published to date, in spite of the fact that only about half of his material has been printed. Campbell was a folklorist well ahead of his time, and one of the more important contributions he made to folklore research was in his insistence that the tales be given as they were received. The "improvement" mentality affected virtually every art form in the Victorian era, and many of his contemporaries felt that the folk tales needed polishing before they were printed, thus substantially undermining their value — like gilding an ancient copper coin — as Campbell described it. The Gaelic folk tales that Campbell published represent the real, unvarnished tradition.

The general interest in European folk tales soon revealed some interesting coincidences. Many of the tales throughout Europe, the Middle East, and into Asia were identical in their important essentials. They were obviously a common body of lore, but where they originated and how they became so widespread is unknown. In spite of their similarity, however, the tales were always localized. Campbell commented on this process and also on how literary tales were sometimes incorporated into the oral tradition but in such a fashion as to become very much a part of the native folk tradition. As with the other arts, Gaels had such a solid cultural foundation that they were easily able to absorb and "Gaelicize" new material:

> ... old men and women are still found who have hardly stirred from their native islands, who speak only Gaelic, and cannot read or write, and yet their minds are filled with a mass of popular lore, as various as the wreck piled on the shores of Spitzbergen [Norway]. If such as these get hold of the contents of a story book, they seem unconsciously to extract the incidents, and reject all the rest, — to select the true wood, and throw away foreign ornament, just as they chip off the paint of a stranded mast, or scrape the sea-weed off a log when they build it into a roof. I have given one specimen of a story, which I believe to be derived from the "Arabian Nights," though it is quite impossible that the man who told it to Hector MacLean, and who told it to me also, in nearly the same words, can have got it directly from any book; for he cannot read at all, and he does not understand English. (J. F. Campbell: 8–9)

Gaelic folk tales, then, are part of an immense body of western literature that has been passed on in the oral tradition in countless cultures. And, as MacEdward Leach pointed out, they were unrivalled in their quality and were once well represented in Nova Scotia — a point John Francis Campbell was well aware of when he began his collecting nearly 150 years ago:

> I have wondered amongst the peasantry of many countries, and this trip [to the Highlands] but confirmed my old impression. There are few peasants that I think so highly of, none that I like so well. Scotch Highlanders have faults in plenty, but they have the bearing of Nature's own gentlemen — the delicate, natural tact which discovers, and the good taste which avoids, all that would hurt or offend a guest. The poorest is ever the readiest to share the best he has with the stranger. A kind word kindly meant is never thrown away, and whatever may be the faults of this people, I have never found a boor or a churl in a Highland bothy.
>
> Celts have played their part in history, and they have a part to play still in Canada and Australia, where their language and character still leave a trace, if they do not influence the destiny of these new worlds. There are hundreds in those distant lands whose language is still Gaelic, and to whom these stories are familiar, and if

this book should ever remind any of them of the old country, I shall not have worked in vain in the land which they call "Tir nam Beann, 's nan Gleann, 's nan Gaisgeach." (The land of hills, glens and heroes). (J. F. Campbell: 17)

Campbell's observation was apt. Even in the following century, folk collectors in the Highlands and in Nova Scotia were describing a world very similar to the one that Campbell had encountered in the mid-19th century. In the 1940s, Charles Dunn of Harvard University recorded tales in different parts of Cape Breton. Rev. Malcolm MacDonell of Hillsdale, Cape Breton, transcribed from his neighbour Hector Campbell, as did Prof. Kenneth Jackson of Harvard University (and later the University of Edinburgh). MacEdward Leach recorded Hector Campbell in the 1950s. In the 1960s, Kathleen MacKinnon of Tiree, Scotland, recorded a traditional tale from Hughie Dan MacDonnell of Deepdale, Cape Breton, while studying at St. Francis Xavier University, which was later published. Further recordings of Hector Campbell's repertoire were made in the 1960s by Sr. Margaret MacDonell of Hillsdale and by Dr. Gordon MacLennan of University College Dublin (and later Ottawa University). Sister MacDonell and John Shaw later published some of Hector Campbell's repertoire in *Luirgean Eachain Niall* (Tales of Hector son of Neil). At roughly the same period in the late 1960s, C. I. N. MacLeod of St. Francis Xavier University published, *Sgialachdan a' Albainn Nuaidh*, (Gaelic Stories from Nova Scotia).

During the 1970s, various collectors donated recordings of Gaelic tales to the Beaton Institute Archive at University College of Cape Breton. Ronald Caplan also began collecting and publishing English versions of traditional Gaelic tales in his popular, *Cape Breton's Magazine*. Caplan later generously donated tapes of his recording sessions to the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. The most significant collection took place in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the Gaelic Folklore Project was initiated at St. Francis Xavier University with funding from the Multiculturalism Directorate in Ottawa. Collector John Shaw recorded nearly 400 traditional Gaelic tales as part of that initiative. In 1987 Shaw published, with tradition bearer, Joe Neil MacNeil, *Sgeul Gu Latha (Tales until Dawn): The World of A Cape Breton Gaelic Story-Teller*. In it were not only MacNeil's vast store of tales and lore but also a description of the Gaelic environment in which these stories found life in Nova Scotia. The description of that world was not unlike that offered by John Francis Campbell in the Highlands over a hundred years earlier. Shaw has also recently published another collection of the tales (and songs) of Inverness County tradition bearer Lauchie "Dan N." MacLellan, *Brigh an Òrain (A Story in Every Song): The Songs and Tales of Lauchie MacLellan*. The Cape Breton–based Celtic quarterly *Am Bràighe* also regularly features traditional Gaelic tales (usually with translations by Jim Watson).

Drama

Drama is not an art for which Gaelic culture has a particularly strong reputation, but there have been interesting examples of its use within the Gaelic community over the last century. The roots of Gaelic drama are not particularly clear in Nova Scotia, but it is worth noting that much of the basis of Gaelic humour lies in a close observation of the foibles of human nature. This should hardly be surprising in such an intimate society. The ability to mimic or "take someone off" is still a notable part of the humour of Gaelic communities and extends to imitating voice, facial expressions, actions, and musical and dance performance styles. The results are often quite striking, and some entire families are able to "take off" local individuals in this nature, regardless of sex.

The first clear examples that have been discovered of drama in the Nova Scotia Gaelic community date to the early decades of the 20th century, suggesting that Gaels were adapting some of their own cultural store to new forms of expression. John Joseph MacKinnon, a noted piper and "avid" singer from the Gaelic stronghold and piping hotbed of French River (a South Uist settlement), wrote Gaelic plays, which were performed at the Lyceum in Sydney (now home to the Cape Breton School of Crafts). MacKinnon taught at the St. Francis Xavier University's extension department and at University College of Cape Breton and was an auditor for the Co-op Movement. (Scott Williams, *Pipers of Nova Scotia: Biographical Sketches, 1773 to 2000*, Antigonish: Scott Williams Publishing, 2000: 153) His courses were directly related to the Co-op Movement, and it is possible that this was the motivation for his venture into Gaelic drama. His Gaelic plays are currently housed in the Beaton Institute Archive.

Gaelic drama was also noted in the 1950s in rural Cape Breton, although it is difficult to tell whether the impetus for this experimentation was local or the result of the encouragement of outside organizers, as the activities were part of the educational program facilitated by Maj. C. I. N. MacLeod. Gaelic dramas were noted in areas such as South West Margaree and the Iona district. The areas where the plays were noted were, however, great strongholds of Gaelic in Nova Scotia with a strong representation in the Gaelic language arts, including the making of songs. "From a linguistic point of view, the Christmas Island–Benacadie development continues to be outstanding, particularly in the Gaelic dramatic sphere." (MacLeod to Col. D. C. Sinclair; c.1950)

The impression that Gaelic drama may not have been especially deeply rooted in the local community culture, seems supported by the fact that very little in the way of drama appears to have happened for the next quarter century. Not much more is heard of Gaelic drama until 1972, when Gaelic learners in Glendale staged a play before a crowd of more than 300.

> More than 300 people turned out to watch a group of Gaelic-speakers and Gaelic-learners stage what was believed to be the first Gaelic play to have been produced in Nova Scotia in 25 years. It was a two act play by the late Rev. Stanley MacDonald, brother to Angus L. MacDonald, the late premier. The play was entitled "Tha Katie Ann a' Tighinn Dhachaidh" [Katie Ann is Coming Home], a satire about a local woman who moved to Boston where she lost her Gaelic, developed a New England accent and then returned home to Cape Breton, where her pretensions eventually fell away and she rediscovered the language she lost. The cast of ten were mostly learners in classes conducted by Rev. John Angus Rankin, who produced the play and acted in one of the lead roles. Learners from similar classes in Port Hawkesbury and Creignish sang Gaelic songs in a concert after the play. (*Chronicle Herald* 18 April 1972: 17)

Drama continues to feature in a small role in Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia and humour seems to be the favoured vehicle for its delivery. In 2001, *An Cliath Clis*, a Halifax-based group made up largely of expatriate Cape Bretoners who gather to sing Gaelic songs, developed a Gaelic skit "taking off" Sonny and Cher, which is going down well. While Sonny and Cher may not exactly be the deepest subjects ever imagined, such a creative use of the language, especially in a humorous context and especially among learners, is very promising.

English Literature

Although not strictly speaking within the Gaelic literary tradition, the works of Sheldon Currie and Alistair MacLeod deserve mention. Currie's story *The Glace Bay Miner's Museum* was made into a major motion picture, *Margaret's Museum*, and demonstrated the potentially wide audience appeal of the Gaelic story in Nova Scotia but also, to a certain extent, how it could be marginalized in the process. Currie's own version of the "museum" may be interpreted as being substantially about the decline of Gaelic culture in Cape Breton and its parallels in the wider exploitation of industrial society. The movie version, by contrast, largely reduced the Gaelic element of this story to a backdrop of local colour. Traditional Gaelic singers from Iona were brought in to film a couple of sequences, including a ceilidh house singing session. Although they had been active throughout Cape Breton for decades, they found themselves presented with an ancient gentleman, whom they had never heard of, but who, they were assured, was a "Gaelic singer" or at least looked like one as far as the production crew were concerned. According to Maxie MacNeil, one of Cape Breton's most gifted and generous traditional singers, their attempt to sing with the "Gaelic singer" was something of a disaster, but after two takes, the director was satisfied that he had what he wanted. He did, however, insist that the singers walk across the street "about fourteen times" before he was satisfied that the art form of walking had been adequately captured on film. (Conversation: Maxie MacNeil c. 1998)

Alistair MacLeod's work is deeply rooted in both the rural Gaelic community and in Gaelic culture. It is infused with Gaelic folk history, folk tale, and a huge variety of motifs from his own family and community culture and is presented very much as oral literature — based on oral tradition and consciously crafted so that it might be read aloud. MacLeod's short stories and recent novel have won international acclaim and have been translated into many languages, including, interestingly enough, Gaelic. Some of his stories have also been reproduced in film by the National Film Board of Canada and also, more recently, in Gaelic in Scotland. The wide appeal of authors writing in the medium of English but with an informed view of Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture has obvious potential to attract visitors to the local setting for the stories and for the author's inspirations. At the moment, there is no organized effort to take advantage of this through literary tours, for example, or through signage and information.

History and Genealogy

Probably the most neglected part of the Gaelic prose narrative tradition is history and its closely related counterpart in the Gaelic tradition, genealogy. When J. F. Campbell first published his collection of Gaelic tales in the mid-19th century, he indicated that by far the most popular were those relating to history. However, he did not collect those items and very little has ever been done either to collect or teach Gaelic history in the intervening century and a half. Celtic scholars over the last century have tended to focus their efforts on language and literature, while historians have tended to ignore Gaelic altogether. From a professional historical perspective, this has been a great tragedy, for what evidence is available suggests that the quality of the historical material preserved in the oral tradition was equal to that of the other genres. In light of the decline of the Gaelic language, the inexplicable slackness in recording this material on the part of academics over the last centuries has resulted in an incalculable loss.

This weakness has come back to haunt Gaelic communities and Gaelic culture in several ways. With the decline of the oral tradition, Gaels have become increasingly dependent on institutions to form an understanding of their past. Unfortunately, a great many of the published sources of Scottish history are tinged with prejudice and more than a little ignorance and romanticism when it comes to the presentation of Gaelic history. Few have made good (if any) use of Gaelic sources. In effect, until very recently, the main body of historical writing that has been available has done more to perpetuate myth and to de-educate Gaels with regard to many of the fundamentals of their history. That is beginning to change, but the process is slow, and materials are still not widely available. In Nova Scotia, only one academic history of the Gaels in Nova Scotia has been produced by a researcher with competence to handle Gaelic sources — and that by a visiting scholar from Harvard University, Charles Dunn. The result, *Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Cape Breton and Eastern Nova Scotia*, has been a notable success but is now half a century old.

This research lacuna presents two problems. Firstly, there is a simple lack of material available. Teachers attempting to put together a Gaelic cultural studies program, for example, and already hampered by a shoestring budget, are further constrained by the lack of a ready source of reliable and exhaustive information from which to develop curriculum and derive teaching aids. Secondly, nature abhors a vacuum, and if good information is not available the old mythologies and stereotypes (not to mention new ones) will be pressed into service and, thanks to advancing technologies, more widely disseminated than ever before. Two otherwise very interesting documentaries produced in Scotland underscore the problem from the Nova Scotian perspective.

A generation ago, a documentary entitled, *The Blood Is Strong* was produced, tracing the Gaelic immigrant trail through significant North American settlements such as North Carolina, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia and investigating the survival of Gaelic culture in these areas. Program researchers found to their surprise that most of the evidence they unearthed, such as letters sent back to Scotland, was very positive in tone regarding immigration and settlement, but since this so strongly contradicted the received wisdom regarding Highland immigrants, the producers concluded that the positive accounts were "surface brightness" designed to mask the depth of the suffering of the immigrants and their longing for the Highlands. And so, another stereotype was strongly reinforced and disseminated in the face of solid historical evidence to the contrary (evidence that has been more carefully considered by several scholars since but that is still not widely available).

More recently, the BBC produced a series of programs entitled *Na h-Eilthirich (The Emigrants)*, which used a similar format to *The Blood Is Strong* but covered a much wider portion of the diaspora. During the program on Nova Scotia, the presenter, apparently unaware of the massive changes that had occurred in the musical culture of Scotland since the departure of the emigrants and somewhat puzzled by the more traditional forms of music that he encountered in Cape Breton, concluded that this was "new culture" — an outgrowth from old Gaelic tradition, to be sure, but obviously not as deeply rooted as what was to be found in Scotland. Not only did the program serve to perpetuate a particular damaging myth (we shall see how far off the mark the comment was later in the report), it unintentionally but nonetheless authoritatively questioned the rootedness of one of the healthier of Nova Scotia's Gaelic traditions. The time would certainly seem ripe for a similar diaspora program to be produced from the Nova Scotian perspective based on a solid understanding of local culture and history.

Fortunately, amateur Gaelic scholars have been more active than their academic counterparts and have done a fairly good job of translating at least a small amount of the Gaelic oral historical tradition into English for future generations. History constantly interacted with many of the other art forms; stories had obvious historical content as did many songs, but even tunes and lore were often linked to historical events of great significance to Gaels. Gaels got a history lesson nearly every time cultural material was shared, as history often provided the context for these other art forms. They also shared, discussed, and analyzed historical matter on its own, and most communities had expert scholars in the oral tradition that specialized in history and/or genealogy. The fact that individual Gaels used a *sloinneadh* to identify themselves — a patronymic often stretching back five, six generations and more suggests the framework upon which Gaels structured their historical view. It often touched on great events but was intimate and oriented toward family and local community. That is where the strength of the Gaelic historical record is currently found — in genealogy and community history.

From the late 19th century, particularly, efforts were made by people in communities throughout Nova Scotia to record aspects of this historical oral tradition, and the result has been some exceptionally good publications full of material that would otherwise almost certainly have been lost forever. Patterson's *History of Pictou County*, and *History of Victoria County*, MacGillivray's *History of Antigonish County*, MacDougall's *The History of Inverness County*, *Mabou Pioneers* (vols. I and II), and *Johnston's*, *The History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia* and *The History of Christmas Island Parish*, and countless other such works detailing the settlement and development of small communities throughout Gaelic Nova Scotia are ripe with information on genealogy, early settlement history, historical anecdotes from Scotland, naming practices, references to songs and items of Gaelic folklore, and a host of other valuable materials. The works vary considerably in quality, in size, and in Gaelic orientation and content; some are the work of professional historians, others of community committees, but a great many are of wide and considerable interest.

Many of the major works are still readily available. Sandy Publishing of Nova Scotia, for example, has made something of a specialty in supplying these larger community history/genealogies and has republished *Mabou Pioneers*, which devotes nearly 900 pages to the families of Mabou Parish, drawn almost exclusively from oral tradition. The reason for the wide popularity of these "community" histories is the equally wide relevance of the material. Some fill gaps in history in the Scottish Highlands and are of likely interest to people in those districts, but they do not seem well known there yet. Other material is of general interest to students of Nova Scotian history and to scholars interested in Gaelic history and culture, generally. Most of the material is of interest to people in the local community but, due to a long history of out-migration, that diaspora is now very large, and the community histories and their often extensive genealogies are proving very useful to people scattered throughout North America who have taken an interest in their family history.

In addition to these larger compiled works, there are frequent items of local historical and genealogical interest in the local media. Articles on local history and genealogy by Jim St. Clair have been a feature in the Inverness *Oran*, the *Parti-paper*, and the Victoria *Standard*, for the last 20 years. Similar material has been featured on CBC radio for more than a decade.

Building on the strength of this aspect of Gaelic culture seems to present some opportunities for local communities and particularly for those that have active local historical societies and several of these types of local historical publications available. Family history is one of the fastest-growing hobbies in North America, and Nova Scotia is one of those significant areas to which many North Americans trace their family roots. Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management had 16,296 user visits last year, of which approximately 11,000 were for genealogical research. It is also worth noting that fully 25 per cent of the visitors were new researchers. (Correspondence: Phillip L. Hartling, Reference Archivist, Public and Support Services Division, NSARM: February 2001)

Genealogical records are not as readily available outside Halifax, but the situation is improving. There are various records in government agencies scattered throughout the province, in museums, and increasingly in local historical society holdings. The Nova Scotia Museum's publication *Museums, Archives and other Heritage Resources 2000* lists institutions in the province and summarizes their holdings, and many of these have genealogical resources. Roots Cape Breton at the Highland Village Museum is one example of this sort of development, compiling existing archival records, conducting new research, and attempting to make this material more widely available. Local communities are also active in investigating history, organizing "pioneer" days, and sponsoring talks, the collection of material, and the publication of community histories. Last year, for example, Mabou had a pioneer celebration, while Judique had pioneer workshops for children, and the small community of Glendale sponsored "Glendale Genealogy Roots Day," attracting 50 participants. Such initiatives offer excellent opportunities for wide participation in the culture and would seem to have the potential for small-scale tourism development. Some useful lessons for future direction might be learned from experience in Scotland.

The *Comann Eachdraidh* (Historical Society) movement in Gaelic Scotland was sponsored by the Bernard Van Leer Foundation and the local council *Comhairle nan Eilean* (The Islands' Council) in the late 1970s and early 1980s to, among other things, create "an awareness of cultural identity and community history as a means of boosting morale and promoting a discriminating understanding of the past and of its influence on the present." (*Eachdraidh a-Màireach (History Tomorrow): Development Survey and Conference of Comainn Eachdraidh*, Fosglan, Colaisde Caisteal Leòdhais, 1997: 1) The program proved very successful, and before long more than 20 independent historical societies had formed, in addition to the core societies that had received initial sponsorship. In light of the weak representation of Gaelic culture and history in the schools of eastern Nova Scotia, the experience of the Comann Eachdraidh movement in Scotland seems particularly relevant:

> Comainn Eachdraidh [Historical Societies], deeply embedded in their communities, demonstrate a vital educational process in action and provide a valuable service. Their work celebrates and appraises culture and environment, engages the local population at several levels, generates discussion of the past, present and future and in some cases, impinges directly on the school curriculum. A rich seam has been exposed and communal energy is applied across several disciplines. However, realization of the potential of the activity, of the groups and of the individuals involved is seriously restricted by unresolved problems in fields such as training, organization, management of resources, communications and long-term planning. (*Eachdraidh*, 1997: 1)

The attempts of the *Comann Eachdraidh* movement to capitalize on local skills and energy and to build synergies through coordination of effort and through the active involvement of educational institutions such as Lews Castle College might suggest a potential future direction for community history groups in Nova Scotia. The involvement of educational institutions such as St. Francis Xavier University or University College of Cape Breton and the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum in professional development and in supplying access to research materials might help establish a network of independent organizations that not only provide an important local service but that may also develop a coordinated infrastructure, which could be accessed very effectively by genealogy-tourists interested in visiting the area to pursue family history. The use of touring exhibits hosted by various local history societies in Gaelic Scotland also suggests potential community enrichment as well as tourism appeal.

Music and Dance

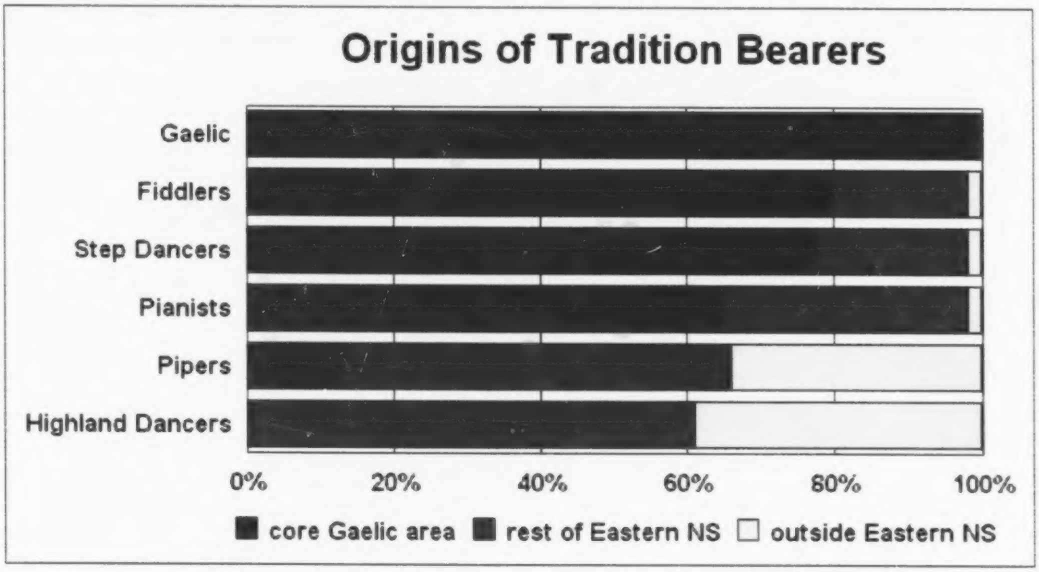
The Gaels' affection for music may be gathered from the old Gaelic proverb *Thig crioch air an t-saoghal, ach mairidh ceòl agus gaol* (An end will come to the world, but music and love will live forever). Gaels enjoyed (and continue to enjoy) a rich culture of music and dance, but it is a culture that has had its share of setbacks as well as successes. Cape Breton fiddlers may be enjoying international acclaim today, but only a generation ago there was a very real fear that the art form was about to be lost. That the tradition could bounce back so strongly from near oblivion is testament to its continuing resilience; that it was in such a dangerous position in the first place is testament to its vulnerability.

The roots of Gaelic Nova Scotia's music and dance are in the Scottish Highlands, but that is not always as easy to determine as might be imagined. Identifying "Gaelic" music or dance is not as straightforward a process as identifying Gaelic language arts, which are, for the most part, tied by default to a distinctive speech community. Music and dance forms cross cultural boundaries much more readily, and their origins are often much less apparent on first meeting. Gaelic traditional music forms have crossed the cultural boundary in this fashion and have been quite influential among other ethnic groups, particularly in Cape Breton. Despite this, the correlation between these forms of music and dance and the core Gaelic areas of the province in this century remains remarkably high.

A much larger problem both in terms of identifying elements of Gaelic musical culture and in terms of cultural transmission is not so much what happened to the music in Nova Scotia since the immigrants arrived but what happened to it in Scotland since they left. A combination of religious repression, particularly in the 19th century, and "improvement" — the modification of Gaelic cultural forms by external mediators to suit the tastes of people outside Gaelic society — have had a profound impact on the musical culture of Scotland. Some of the forms of Gaelic musical culture still in robust health in Nova Scotia have disappeared from the Scottish Highlands altogether, while others have been radically changed, removed from a Gaelic society to an English society, from the rural to the urban, from the folk to the "art" culture and divorced from their former functions.

The extent of the dislocation of the recontextualized forms of music and dance can be readily seen in Nova Scotia. A database of approximately 3,000 tradition bearers was constructed to demonstrate this comprising nearly 1,000 fiddlers, pianists, and step dancers extracted from *The Cape Breton Fiddler* and *A Cape Breton Ceilidh;* approximately 500 Highland dancers located through the Highland dance organizations in the province, and nearly 1,500 pipers extracted from Scott Williams's exhaustive study, *Pipers of Nova Scotia: Biographical Sketches, 1773 to 2000.* By plotting exponents of these arts against the core Gaelic regions of the province this past century as has been done with the Gaelic language arts, a striking picture emerges that very much agrees with what is known (although less often admitted) about the degree of separation that has occurred between piping and Highland dancing in their modern forms and traditional Gaelic folk culture.

Traditional art forms such as fiddling and step dancing show a very high correlation with the core Gaelic areas of the province — close to 80 per cent in both cases. The same is true of piano accompaniment — a Nova Scotian innovation that nevertheless has sprung directly out of the Gaelic musical aesthetic and has remained closely bound to it. The correlation is close to 70 per cent with core Gaelic areas and would probably have been somewhat higher if the data could have been more refined (as will be explained later). What will undoubtedly come as a surprise to many is that it is the two cultural forms probably most closely associated with "Scottish" culture in the popular imagination that have the lowest correspondence with Gaelic areas — a little more than ten per cent in the case of the bagpipe and almost zero in the case of Highland dancing.



These correlations are of considerable importance. Piping and Highland dancing are strongly associated with "Scottish" culture in the minds of many (and have been heavily promoted by local cultural institutions and in tourism promotions), yet they are extremely weakly represented in Gaelic areas of the province. By the same token, art forms such as fiddling and step dancing, which *are* strongly rooted in the Gaelic communities of Nova Scotia, are routinely dismissed as "Irish" or some odd amalgam from various cultural inputs and rarely receive significant support from institutions that supposedly exist to promote Gaelic culture and, until very recently, have been largely absent from tourism promotions that have made such frequent reference to Nova Scotia's Scottish heritage as one of the province's unique attractions.

Piping

Piping, perhaps more than any other Gaelic art, gives us an insight into the tremendous pressures that were being exerted upon Gaelic culture from the late 18th century onward as Gaelic art forms were increasingly pulled from their traditional social and cultural contexts. It not only directly reveals some of the important processes of change that would affect most Gaelic art forms to a greater or lesser extent, but also somewhat more indirectly reveals the power of mainstream urban English society to generate a commanding discourse that rationalizes and justifies the loss of rural Gaelic authority over the cultural evolution of Gaelic art forms. The history of piping in Scotland and Nova Scotia is a history in miniature of the more general treatment of Gaelic culture over the last two centuries but offers a particularly important object lesson for tourism promoters who have shown such a predilection for the costume and pageantry associated with piping, Highland dancing, and Highland games and who have so frequently resorted to those images to promote Nova Scotia's Gaelic heritage.

The bagpipe, contrary to popular belief, was widespread in various forms throughout Europe and the Near East. It became a prestige instrument in Scotland relatively late, supplanting the *clarsach* (harp) as the principal instrument of the Gaelic court sometime in the 16th or 17th century. The elite pipers were members of the learned orders attached to all the great families of the Highlands and enjoyed very high standing in society. The greatest piping dynasties established colleges in their home districts to which prospective students from all over the Highlands would come for finishing after completing years of local training in their own districts. It appears to have been the frequent practice of these great pipers to finish their own training at colleges other than their own, helping ensure a cohesive tradition throughout Gaelic Scotland. Alongside this elite tradition there existed a less clearly defined but clearly robust folk tradition of piping throughout the Highlands. As with most facets of elite Gaelic culture, however, piping was in serious decline by the emigration era.

As the great chiefs began moving in southern aristocratic circles and adopting the cultural pursuits of the English aristocracy, patronage for the Gaelic arts slipped away. One by one, the piping colleges throughout the Highlands closed, and the *profession* of piping came to an end within its Gaelic context. The experience of the Rankin pipers of Coll and Mull who had been hereditary pipers to the MacLeans for centuries before emigrating to Prince Edward Island was indicative of the falling status of Gaelic and the Gaelic cultural arts in the Highlands.

> Aon latha bha e a'chluich air fheadhain ann an Caisteal Bhreacaidh an uair a' thàinig Bàillidh Fhreaslain, a bha 'na mhaor air oighreachd Cholla, an rathad. Thionndaidh am Baillidh, a bha mothachadh mar a bha inbhe a'phiobaire 'g a ìsleachadh a lìon beag is beag, agus thuirt e ris: "Cuir bhuait sin, 'n uair a bhios càch còmhla ris na h-uaislean bithidh tusa còmhla ris na coin." Ghabh Conduiligh a chomhairle agus goirid na dhéidh sin thug e 'n t-arm air. (Neil Rankin Morison, "The Rankins," *Clan MacLean Association*: 75)
>
> One day he was playing the chanter in Breachacha Castle when Bailiff Freaslan, the factor on the Coll estate came over. The Bailiff perceived that the piper's rank in society was being humbled bit by bit, and he said to him: "Put that from you; when others will be in the company of the nobles you will be in the company of the dogs." Con Douly took his advice and shortly after that he joined the army. (My translation)

Without patronage, the great piping families were forced to abandon piping as a profession and seek other means of livelihood. Some, like Con Douly Rankin, pursued new professional opportunities, while others returned to the land and farming.

By the emigration era, piping as an institution was dead, but it survived as an important part of a vigorous Gaelic folk culture. Pipers were exceedingly numerous amongst the early settlers and retained their popularity and something of their respected status. The famous story of the *Hector* emigrants paying the fare of the young piper who wanted to come to Nova Scotia with them in 1773 is indicative of how highly valued pipers were. Representatives of the great piping dynasties were scattered throughout Nova Scotia: the MacKays of Gairloch were represented in New Gairloch, Pictou County; the Johnstons of Coll, who studied with the MacCrimmons in Skye (and probably began their training with the Rankins who emigrated to Prince Edward Island), were represented at River John, Pictou County; the MacGillivray pipers of Arisaig, who were believed to have studied with the MacKays of Gairloch, were represented at Highfield, Antigonish County; the MacKinnons of Muck, known as *Clann Ionmhuinn a' Chiùil* (The MacKinnons of the Music), settled along the shores of East Lake Ainslie in Inverness County; the Jamieson pipers of Canna settled not far from them in Piper's Glen, where they were celebrated in local Gaelic song; the MacNeil pipers from Barra settled in Piper's Cove near Grand Narrows in Cape Breton County; and not far from them, the MacIntyre pipers of South Uist, whose family may once have been pipers to Clanranald, were to be found scattered in several districts of rural Cape Breton County from Boisdale to French Road (Williams, 2000).

These and countless other pipers were noted throughout rural Nova Scotia from the earliest times of settlement. They indicate that piping was widely practiced in Scotland and was in considerable health at the time of emigration, despite institutional collapse. The fact that a fair proportion of these families were also Protestant gives further support to the argument that there was little difference in the secular culture of Catholic and Protestant Highlanders at the time the first emigrations were beginning to Nova Scotia in the late 18th and very early 19th centuries.

How close the folk tradition of piping was to the elite arm of the art is a debate that frequently generates more heat than light in Scotland. At the risk of over-simplification, important modern institutional piping authorities have argued that the elite professional pipers of the 18th century and before restricted themselves to a complex, highly ornamented form of music known both as *Ceòl Mór* (literally "big music") and more commonly, but less correctly, as *pibroch*, an anglicization of the general Gaelic word for piping, *piobaireachd*. They believe that the playing of *Ceòl Beag* (literally "small music" but generally translated as "light music"), the music strongly but not exclusively associated with dancing in the Highlands, was the purview of unschooled "country pipers." While this argument would certainly explain the rather startling gulf between the Gaelic folk tradition and the current modern style of piping as prescribed by the leading institutions of Scotland it does not accord with what we know of Gaelic culture and society in the 18th century.

> In the late eighteenth-century any power to direct in matters of music and dance would have rested much more with what was left of the traditional Gaelic middle class (chieftains and tacksmen) than with the clergy, and as John Ramsay of Ochtertyre said in the last decades of the eighteenth century, the degree of natural intimacy that existed between middle class and ordinary Gaels was remarkable; theirs was a profoundly shared culture. Therein lay the essence of clan social and military cohesion. Examples of chieftains and tacksmen spontaneously integrating themselves in the music and dance pastimes of their people are found throughout the *Gàidhealtachd*. (Gibson 1998, 138)

> In March 1858, after the third and successful attack on the Indian "mutineers" at Lucknow, a private in Captain Baird's Number Six company in the 42nd Regiment wrote, "But as we approached a big bungalow our hearts were cheered by the sound of the bagpipes playing a Foursome Reel. When we were halted and dismissed I went into the building, and there were four or five sets up dancing with all their might, Captain Macpherson and Sir David Baird footing it among the rest." (Gibson 1998, 183)

Considering that there is ample evidence that dance music was popularly played on the bagpipes and that chiefs and tacksmen regularly indulged in this form of dancing, both in their own company and in the company of the common people of the Highlands, it seems more than a little odd to argue that pipers enjoyed such exalted status in Gaelic society that they would not "lower" themselves (as it has often been phrased) to provide such music for their fellow tacksmen, not to mention their chiefs — who also happened to be their patrons. They had been raised in the same social milieu and had been exposed since birth to the same diverse store of Gaelic tradition. Why they should single out dance and dance music for rejection has never been plausibly explained.

The interlocking of the various strands of the Gaelic folk tradition attested again and again in Nova Scotia was also an important feature of the tradition in Gaelic Scotland and there is no reason to believe that the case was any different for the elite Gaelic pipers. The experience of Joseph MacDonald provides evidence of several of these important features among the cultural pursuits of the middle class of the 18th century referred to above by Gibson. MacDonald, a son of Rev. Murdo MacDonald, minister of Durness, Sutherland (the seat of Donald MacKay, fourth Lord Reay), compiled what would be the first published but sadly much neglected manuscript of Highland bagpipe tunes in the late 1750s, the *Compleat Theory of the Scots Highland Bagpipe*.

> The children were encouraged to compose as well as play, and it is said that some of Joseph and Flora's tunes were used for songs by their father's most celebrated parishioner, the poet Rob Donn MacKay. Joseph also made rapid progress on the violin under the tuition of Kenneth Sutherland of Keoldale, factor of the barony of Durness, and on the pipes, probably under Rob Donn's friend George MacLeod, piper to Lord Reay. He also played the flute and the oboe. (Donaldson 2000, 21)

> He [Joseph MacDonald] then applied himself seriously to make a collection of that music, and to write down the pieces that he knew, or had occasion to hear; and which probably had never before appeared in musical characters. During upwards of two years, which he spent in that country [i.e., c.1758–60], he continued to enlarge his collection, by the addition of such pieces as he heard in different parts of it. He also wrote out some of the best poems that were sung to them, and made a collection of the different kinds of bagpipe-music. (Patrick MacDonald on his brother Joseph: Donaldson 2000, 25)

That the art forms of the Gaelic elite were an integral part of Gaelic society, well understood and very keenly appreciated by the common people of the Highlands, has been well attested by numerous sources over the centuries on both sides of the Atlantic and is no more than we should expect from a society such as existed in the *Gàidhealtachd*. It is likely that the elite cadre of professional pipers far excelled their amateur colleagues in the playing of the technically demanding *Ceòl Mór*, although it would be odd if the better of the amateurs did not have a stab at the form on occasion as well. But the argument that the elite players were widely separated from the rest of the Gaelic tradition — that their music owed little or nothing to the Gaelic song tradition, that they did not play or appreciate dance music, and that they restricted their own playing to some sort of an arcane "classical" music, which only the elite could understand, seems little more than an attempt to claim historical authority for *Ceòl Mór's* current lack of connection to those facets of Gaelic culture in spite of its very clear Gaelic heritage.

Certainly, in the New World, where piping survived, it survived as folk music, regardless of the ancestry of the pipers who played it. Pipers were frequently noted as being skilled at other Gaelic art forms such as poetry, singing, fiddling, or step dancing, which was typical of the broad type of musicality to be found in Gaelic folk culture, and for their ability to play dance music from the earliest times of settlement in Nova Scotia.

> Whatever the technical abilities of the community pipers, and these varied widely, what the Gaelic-speaking piper in the Nova Scotian *Gàidhealtachd* brought from the second half of the eighteenth century was a prime function, the production of step-dance music (work music, for haying or rowing, is doubtless part of the same rhythmic concept). This required confident and continuous music played to specific rhythms. Having music in you in Gaelic Cape Breton still means having a large repertoire and being able quickly to memorize new material by ear. As with step-dance fiddling, musicality inevitably implies the ability to improvise, adapt, innovate, and, above all, keep going. Countless liberties are taken with compositions; for the non-playing dancer they may often be improvements. For the ear-learned traditional musician, the absence of a script freed music and spawned what in modern piping are officially accepted as "settings". No tune may ever be played the same way, but when function is the supreme dictate there is much greater room for spontaneous alteration. At its extreme there are almost new tunes, new "turns," or phrases that the musician adds or substitutes for no reason other than that they come into his mind and his fingers are appropriately linked to his musical thoughts. (Gibson 1998, 241)

The living Gaelic folk-music tradition of Nova Scotia referred to by John Gibson above could provide important insights into the evolution of piping in Scotland, but it has received next to no attention from piping authorities. This is hardly surprising, as the traditions of Gaelic Scotland have also received far less serious attention than should be expected from the piping establishment, which has evolved over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. This is unfortunate, as the living folk tradition represents the best window on the past tradition and helps explain a great deal about the general process of musical evolution. As Gibson points out in relation to *Ceòl Beag*, for example, the phrasing recommended in Joseph MacDonald's theory of the bagpipe, the first ever published, is identical to that used in Cape Breton dance-oriented music today but is directly opposite to that used by modern pipers who consistently point to ancient tradition as justification for their present interpretation of the music, just as they do when attempting to explain the separateness of the modern *Ceòl Mór* sound from the wider family of Gaelic music from which it springs.

> Interestingly enough, one of the two characteristic differences between modern Scottish and modern Scotch Cape Breton strathspey playing is precisely the dotting that MacDonald mentioned (the other is speed of playing, about which little exact information can be taken from early written music). In Cape Breton Gaelic step-dance music (now almost exclusively fiddle music), the first note in the couplet is almost always short and the latter long, a "tackum" in fact. Modern Scottish Pipe Music settings use the form that MacDonald described as unsuitable, which suggests that non-Gaelic forces were responsible for the literate settings of bagpipe music now so universally relied upon and that were widely diffused to the increasingly musically literate public in the nineteenth century. (Gibson 1998, 112)

The often-dramatic differences encountered between institutional piping and Gaelic folk tradition as well as between many forms of Scottish instrumental music and Gaelic music in Nova Scotia today, does rest on historical authority, as institutional officials have long claimed, but the authority is with Gaelic tradition. The importance of Nova Scotia is that the Gaelic instrumental music — particularly in Cape Breton — continued to evolve in a rural Gaelic context where it maintained its dance function in spite of the usurpation of the pipes by the fiddle in the 20th century. While a Gaelic folk-music tradition continued in Scotland as well, it was under much greater pressure from external intermediaries. This was especially evident in piping, where authority for the interpretation of pipe music largely shifted to an urban, English-speaking institutional environment in which, among other things, the music's dance function was drastically reduced, if not lost altogether, at least in a traditional context. This refashioning of pipe music in a non-Gaelic style was powerfully challenged by many generations of Scotland's leading pipers but ultimately to no avail. The institutional forces ranged against them were too powerful and intractable. This has been the subject of some very good scholarship in Scotland and Nova Scotia in recent years, most notably in the work of William Donaldson, John Gibson, and Allan MacDonald. It is the story of cultural undermining by institution. Sadly, the process was imported to Nova Scotia.

Piping, like the other forms of Gaelic cultural expression, was hit by a trinity of woes in the late 18th and early 19th centuries — the loss of patronage and of the Gaelic middle class, discussed above, the emergence of Highland evangelism, and the mediation of English-speaking "improvers." Again, Nova Scotia escaped much of this influence, but this time the escape was a temporary one, as the long shadow of the "improvers" reached virtually around the globe by the 20th century, if not before.

The evangelical censure of piping did not begin to take effect in the *Gàidhealtachd* until the early 19th century. This was occurring in the midst of the emigration era, but its effects were uneven and its impact on the New World communities likely to have been somewhat weaker than in the Highlands. The twin forces of native institutional decline and religious fundamentalism significantly weakened piping in its rural Highland heartland. It is an open question whether these alone would have been significant enough to eradicate the tradition in the Highlands, but allied with the other social pressures in Gaelic Scotland, they were able to dramatically reduce the functional contexts for piping there and to weaken it sufficiently to allow external "improvers" to gain a large measure of creative control of the art form and to claim authority for the setting of playing standards and the evolution of a new performance aesthetic. Oddly enough, as the bagpipes became increasingly associated not only with "improvers" but also with the military and with the concept of service to the British Empire, religious censure seems to have decreased — at least regarding the use of music for that purpose. While this may have helped keep the numbers of pipers from dwindling away, the mediation of such "improvers" wrenched piping from its Gaelic social framework and largely reinvented it as an institution of the urban Scottish Lowlands. It is one of the many ironies that inform Gaelic experience that the bodies chiefly responsible for this should be institutions devoted to preserving and promoting Gaelic culture.

The essential problem with the most powerful institutions devoted to preserving Gaelic culture in the late 18th century was a simple one: they were dominated by Highland chiefs, the very people who were acting as prime agents of anglicization, having abandoned their roles as patrons of the Gaelic arts and having introduced a series of socio-economic changes that were wreaking havoc throughout Gaelic society. From their culturally distant perspective in the southern urban centres of Britain, they were in a very poor position to attempt to preserve their formerly important roles as cultural intermediaries, but that is essentially what they attempted to do. As anglicization took an increasingly large bite of that class by the beginning of the 19th century and as the elite sector of English-speaking society in Britain grew increasingly fascinated with the rude but romantic culture of the Highlands (as they saw it), their influence grew stronger, increasingly misguided, and increasingly malign.

The main institutions that were used to begin the refashioning of Gaelic culture in a manner more acceptable to English gentlemen were the Highland Society of London, founded in 1778, and its satellite branch, which was established in Edinburgh in 1784 and eventually became the Highland Society of Scotland. The membership of the Highland Society was dominated by an extremely powerful class of land-holding nobility. Their chief goal was the economic improvement of the Highlands, but they also resolved to pay due diligence to the language, poetry, and music of the Gaels. In its early years the Highland Society kept a bard, a piper, and a Gaelic scholar — not unlike a typical Gaelic chieftain's court. The Highland Society's peak of meaningful Gaelic cultural activity ran from its inception to about 1825. During this period, it succeeded in having Highland dress legalized in 1782, though few Highlanders returned to it; contributed to Raining's School, the SSPCK's new Gaelic teacher training college in Inverness (1788); gathered a large collection of Gaelic manuscripts, papers, and printed work; subscribed to several collections of Gaelic poetry; commissioned and published an enquiry into the authenticity of Ossian (1805); after many stumbles, compiled a dictionary (1828); lobbied (unsuccessfully) for a chair in Gaelic and Celtic literature at various Scottish universities; and sponsored classes in Gaelic and in piping.

While the early intentions of the Highland Society may have been, at least in part, sincerely concerned with investigating and preserving aspects of Gaelic tradition and informed by real experience and knowledge of Gaelic culture, the Highland Society membership was led primarily by the very men — the former Gaelic chieftains — who were acting as the chief native agents of social change and assimilation in the Highlands. Their economic improvement schemes were based on southern Scottish and English models and were turning traditional Gaelic social organization on its head. Most of these gentlemen had long since left the Highlands to live in the south and were in most ways more intimately involved with the politics and society of the Anglo elite of Britain than with Gaelic communities. None of that was well calculated to make the Highland societies truly sympathetic to rural Gaelic society and to Gaelic folk culture.

Philosophically, the society tended to relegate Gaelic culture to the status of a fabulous but rapidly corrupting antique whose greatest period lay in the long distant and irrecoverable past. This philosophical view was extended to the civilization that continued to exist in the Highlands as the vehicle for that cultural transmission. As they saw it, that society needed to be "modernized" by their active leadership — a goal that was, according to the operating paradigms of the day, fundamentally incompatible with supporting the real social mechanisms that kept Gaelic culture and its literature alive. The result of this fundamental contradiction, especially evident after the 1820s when the leadership had become increasingly separated from any consequential Gaelic cultural contact, was that the Highland Society soon abandoned any goals that might have led to meaningful Gaelic development. Indeed, their sense that Gaelic society and Gaelic folk culture were degraded versions of a former "classical" period and that the best examples of Gaelic culture, therefore, lay in the past, meant that their strategies for preserving Gaelic often worked against the very strengths that the culture still demonstrated.

> The Highland Societies were the first institutions to dedicate at least a part of their endeavour to the traditional performing arts and to popular culture. But their approach was founded on the proposition that the inherited ways of doing things were wrong and must be changed, and they found the concepts of 'Improvement' and 'tradition' difficult to reconcile. Indeed, the urge to transform the economic organization and social mores of the Highlands proved incompatible with the urge

> to promote its traditional culture, and the latter objective was first modified and then abandoned. (Donaldson 2000, 96)

The aristocratic interests combined a potent amalgam of social power and, especially from the 1820s on, an increasing ignorance of Gaelic tradition and an especial suspicion of the aural/oral tradition in which Gaelic music flourished. Unfortunately, they brought those attitudes to bear on piping from an early date. In 1781 they organized the first national piping competition in Falkirk with the intention of making it an annual event. Although just outside the Highlands, Falkirk was chosen as a suitable venue, because it was the site of a large annual cattle fair that drew Gaels from every corner of the Highlands to trade and socialize and was already a very popular Gaelic gathering. In the first years of the competition, it demonstrated this strong Gaelic orientation; the pipers wore their regular day-to-day clothing, played in the presence of a large number of Gaels who were familiar with the music, played tunes of their own choosing, and were judged entirely by the same aural standards in which they had been trained, seemingly by people who had experience with pipe music. Within a few years, this natural Gaelic presentation was entirely eliminated and the competition substantially altered to fall in line with more refined southern aristocratic tastes.

The Glasgow Gaelic Club, an affiliate of the Highland Society of London, but one whose membership was exclusively Gaelic speaking and not dominated by the great chiefs, had been charged with the organization of the first competitions but was soon swept from the field by the powerful Highland gentry based in Edinburgh who succeeded in removing the competition further from its Gaelic base and from its social context and appending it to the English society diversions of the capital.

> And so control was wrested from a Celtic institution with genuine populist roots by an agency based in the eastern Lowlands which was aristocratic in social composition and highly ambiguous in cultural outlook. From the ad-hoc committee set up to oversee the Edinburgh competition in the Autumn of 1783, the Highland Society at Edinburgh, later 'of Scotland' directly sprang. The new Society was made responsible for the Falkirk competition the following year and upon various pretexts its commissioners, led by John Clerk of Eldin, removed it permanently to the capital, where it took its place amongst the diversions of Leith races week when the town was crowded with people of quality. (Donaldson 2000, 74-75)

Once a prestigious institution at the heart of Gaelic society, professional piping (or probably more correctly by that date, semi-professional piping) became something of a sideshow incorporated into the social diversions of English-speaking aristocrats and dressed up in romanticized Highland garb. Walter Scott's successful transformation of Edinburgh into a tartan-strewn mock Highland capital for King George IV's visit in 1822 and the enthusiastic, if largely superficial, interest of the king and later of Queen Victoria in such Highland pageantry made dabbling in Highland culture a fashionable pastime for the upper classes in the 19th century (even as it infuriated some Lowland Scots). That the culture would be substantially "improved" to meet their tastes was virtually a foregone conclusion, as the impetus for that dabbling came from without the *Gàidhealtachd*, was fuelled by the Romantic Movement, and was forged by a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the culture that was ostensibly being celebrated. An entire "season" of greater and lesser events began to coalesce into the "Highland games circuit" during the 19th century, especially when improved rail transportation made it easier for urban tourists to make quick jaunts north to appropriately romantic settings.

> The Highland games movement began as an adjunct to aristocratic social gatherings such as the Northern Meeting, founded in 1788 at Inverness, and the Argyllshire Gathering which began at Oban in 1871. The Northern Meeting was the 'culminatory point of the Highland season ... Half the London world of fashion, all the clever people that could be hunted out from all parts ... flocked to this encampment in the wilderness during the fine autumns ...' There was hunting, and horse racing, balls and dinners, and much seeing and being seen. The fashions were of the highest, and tartan everywhere. The games began in 1837 ... This ostensible celebration of aristocratic chic was underpinned by hard-headed business acumen which prompted a ceaseless promotion of commercial popular culture in pursuit of ever larger audiences. By 1890 the event was attracting 10,000 paying spectators. There were boar races and bicycle races and pigeon shooting and military bands, novelty events, hot air ballooning and lady parachutists. And in the middle of all this one could, in theory, hear some of Scotland's finest professional pipers. (Donaldson 2000, 197–98)

> The Northern Meeting was an English-speaking society affair and it wasn't until 1859, after a fifteen-year hiatus that the Edinburgh piping and dancing competitions were grafted onto it, giving it the Highland aura that it retains. (Gibson 1998, 178–79)

> Sifting through events that have been commonplace since the 1850s to discover what about them is Gaelic shows just how far Highland games are from traditional Scotch pastimes and how alien the concept is. Annually repeated, formal music and dance competitions are a nineteenth-century accretion. Highland gatherings, Caledonian games, athletic games, or whatever title they are given, have all been studied, but no one has effectively rooted Highland games in true Gaelic culture except by wishful thinking. (Gibson 1998, 223–4)

As they became ensconced in a thoroughly non-Gaelic environment and mediated by an increasingly alien aristocratic class, the annual piping competitions became a powerful, if largely unwitting tool for further undermining Gaelic authority over the interpretation and presentation of pipe music — unwitting because the mediators did not intend to undermine the culture. They did, however, fully intend on wresting control of its direction from the Gaelic community, and that is where the damage was done. The main problem was not so much the environment or the promotional demands of providing pageantry and spectacle for an audience that was frequently ignorant of the culture on display, but rather the manner in which cultural authority was directly usurped by an increasingly anglicized elite whose grasp of Gaelic art was growing exceedingly weak.

In order to receive patronage, pipers were soon required to dress in a theatrical "Highland" costume, rather than the clothing they would have normally worn; to play music for audiences that rarely had any great understanding of what they were hearing; to play music prescribed by judges who generally had little or no personal experience with piping, rather than music of their own choosing; and to play according to written scores, which were just beginning to make their appearance in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and which gave the gentlemanly class of judges easy intellectual access to a tradition that they had, for the most part, never bothered to learn by ear — the more demanding method favoured by pipers themselves.

> Throughout these years, the judges' benches were recruited from the upper echelons of the Highland Societies and it was here, and more especially in the committees which served them, that ultimate power lay. Qualifications for judging were modest: one simply had to be a 'gentleman', an 'enthusiast' and 'in Town' during the competition. A quorum was five, but there was in practice no upper limit on numbers, and the opportunity to see and be seen, and to exercise a little authority in public, seems to have exerted a strong appeal. There were no fewer than 26 judges at the competition in 1800. Often they outnumbered the pipers. In the early years, one might see Highland chieftains such as Clanranald and MacNab and the lairds of Lamont and Coll. But time gradually thinned the numbers of potential judges who may have had informed personal experience of the pipe and its music, and by the mid 1820s the committee was forced to draw up a list of some half-dozen people who actually knew what they were doing (presumably so that one of them should always be present). (Donaldson 2000, 84)

> … Gaelic-speaking piobaireachd players, trained by oral methods in a fluid traditional form, increasingly performed before benches of narrowly literate English-speaking judges who had the power to make or break them. Creative control over the music, performer choice, the power to realize a tune according to personal aesthetic judgement based upon innate cultural authority — fundamental principles in a traditional art form — all came under attack. (Donaldson 2000, 98)

> The Highland Societies sought from the outset to undermine the oral basis of piobaireachd by reducing it to a fixed written form. They had a number of motives for doing this. One was an antiquarian desire to collect the fragments before they perished, the response of a literate elite who had little personal knowledge of the culture for which they sought to legislate, and whose education encouraged them to regard traditional culture as by definition incapable of sustaining itself without external intervention. But there were also more narrowly institutional forces at work. The mechanism of competition inevitably tended to favour standardization. If pipers could be induced to play from a fixed written text instead of their own versions of a given tune, they could be more easily compared, and the task of judging made more straightforward. It seemed likely, too, that music thus 'simplified' and 'fixed' would lend itself to teaching in shorter time,

> accelerating — and therefore — cheapening — the training of pipers for the army. (Donaldson 2000, 97)

The aristocratic elite began to substantially refashion the standards around piping in the 19th century and they did so largely in ignorance and largely so that they could maintain the authority their social position taught them to expect without having to expend much energy on actually learning the tradition in any depth. In their efforts to standardize tune settings for their own ease of judgment, they turned to written scores, such as Angus MacKay's *A Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd or Highland Pipe Music*, which appeared in 1838, and with their slavish following of what were often poorly transcribed versions of tunes began to fossilize the tradition while it was still very much alive. Since they had better access to these rare and expensive scores than pipers did and so could often interpret or misinterpret them without effective challenge, their control over the performance aesthetic was increased, while the authority of the Gaelic oral tradition was further undermined.

> As the twentieth century dawned, therefore, the work of Angus MacKay was receiving a largely uncritical endorsement by those whose concern was with 'authority', while being treated with rather greater caution by the musically aware. Although certain of MacKay's ideas, were taken up and adapted by his contemporaries, his desire to establish a standard text found, at best, equivocal support amongst pipers. In the social classes from which the bench was recruited, however, it was a different story. They clung to MacKay's book and considered departure from it, even in the smallest detail, as 'wrong'. Their formal education encouraged them to look for a fixed, original, authoritative score and they consistently failed to grasp that variety and fluidity were inherent qualities in traditional music, signs not of corruption and decay but of well-being and vitality. (Donaldson 2000, 242)

Disastrously, the Highland societies did not even manage to fossilize the tradition as it had been played. Instead, incapable of discerning between good and substantially flawed manuscripts, they institutionalized major theoretical, printing, and transcription errors and began insisting that pipers repeat the errors in competition. These mistakes were then picked up and amplified by the Piobaireachd Society, which emerged as the pre-eminent institutional promoter of *Ceòl Mór* at the beginning of the 20th century. The Piobaireachd Society was perhaps even more authoritarian than the Highland Society had been and certainly took a much more systematic approach to the production and standardization of musical scores and to instructing and judging. They were, however, no more skilled at discerning where the heart of the tradition lay and continued the Highland Society's program of enthusiastically corrupting Gaelic music.

> Growing musical literacy and access to print made it possible for the Piobaireachd Society to use its social power more effectively than the Highland Societies to promote fixed texts and gain control of tradition. In many respects, however, its activities followed a familiar pattern. There was the assumption that the traditional arts were simple and could be quickly mastered so that 'educated'

> outsiders could successfully mediate them; the cult of the amateur which ensured that gentility remained incompatible with serious musical ambition and skill; the pseudo-militaristic and secretive atmosphere in which its activities were conducted; the culture of social exclusion which denied membership to professional pipers; the characteristic combination of little knowledge with much power. (Donaldson 2000, 462)

Pipers had criticized the Highland Society's musical incompetence throughout the 19th century, and they were no less quick to point out that the Piobaireachd Society was every bit as aristocratic, authoritarian, secretive, London-based, and musically illiterate as its predecessor had been.

> … A large sum is spent on publishing music shown to be incorrect in quality and in quantity most unnecessarily full — the taor-luath and crun-luath beats being printed in all the volumes 'in extenso', and incidentally wrongly — a sheer waste of paper, time and money ... the society is guided by a number of well-meaning enthusiasts, and it is no secret that they are blind enthusiasts on the subject of piobaireachd music ... And yet this Society professes to dictate to the piping world what is correct and what is not correct ... The Society's paid instructors are bound, willy nilly, to perpetuate the blunders ... [and] the competence of the Society's judges, with one or two honourable exceptions, must be a matter of grave doubt … (Oban Times, 1910; Donaldson 2000, 308)

Like their compatriots in the Highland Society, however, the members of the Piobaireachd Society were extremely well connected socially, representing the cream of the Scottish gentry and were largely immune to criticism from anyone below their social class — which was just about everyone. The man who played the most consistent and damaging role in creating increasingly corrupted settings of pipe tunes for the Piobaireachd Society and enforcing their use in instruction and competition was Archibald Campbell of Kilberry. Raised in England and educated at Harrow and Cambridge before entering the Civil Service in India, Campbell's knowledge of Gaelic music and Gaelic culture was virtually zero His knowledge of music in general does not appear to have been a great deal better, but through hard work on pipe scores, through the authority his social standing naturally afforded him, and through the degree of secrecy for which the Piobaireachd Society was so roundly condemned, he managed to create a misleading aura of expertise in Gaelic tradition and of scrupulous scholarship in his work on *Ceòl Mór* settings.

Campbell took enormous liberties in scoring *Ceòl Mór* for the Piobaireachd Society, adding folly to error. Dissatisfied with the triple time settings he found in previous manuscripts, he simply rescored them in 4/4 time, excusing the corruption by claiming that the pipers who had gone to the great trouble and expense of transcribing these manuscripts in the previous centuries had deliberately mutilated the tunes so that only a small "in the know" elite would understand how they were to be properly played. Campbell presumably became one of that informed tiny select few in the rich Gaelic environments of Cambridge or India. The fact that several of these Gaelic pipe tunes had spread throughout Europe entering into other cultural musical traditions (including classical music) and retaining their 6/8 time signatures everywhere but in the Piobaireachd Society's settings was telling. (Discussion: Allan MacDonald, 1995) Since Campbell alone appears to have had full access to 18th and 19th-century pipe manuscripts, which had become very rare by the early 20th century, he was easily able to brush aside the criticism of pipers who could rely only on the authority of an increasingly marginalized oral tradition to challenge what he was producing.

In addition to stumbling over time signature, Campbell also struggled with rhythm, a facet of music that written scores do not communicate particularly well and that his apparently not very skilled ear prevented him from grasping when listening to the best pipers of his generation. "It appears that the subtleties of rhythmical balance and contrast exploited by the master pipers largely eluded their pupil. He turned their notes into words. And when he later tried to turn them back into notes, much was lost." (Donaldson 2000, 391) Perhaps even odder for someone who deigned to take on what was a largely self-appointed role as the single most important authority on the Scottish piping tradition, Campbell did not appear fond of melody either.

> Campbell's work suggests an innate mistrust of melody. He divided ceòl mór into two categories, 'heavy stuff' — of which he approved — and 'tuny stuff', of which he was wary ... The 'tuny stuff was forced to depend on melody and was therefore considered inferior. (Donaldson 2000, 392)
>
> On a later occasion [General Frank] Richardson had to reassure the Seaforth Highlanders that their Pipe-Major Donald MacLeod's new piobaireachd 'Cabar Féidh gu Bràth' was indeed ceòl mór despite the fact that it alarmingly resembled a tune, adding that, as such Archibald Campbell would certainly have disapproved of it. (c. 1960; Donaldson 2000, 392–93)

That Campbell's authority enabled him to succeed in his efforts to, as he saw it, improve the rude Highland music of the pipes, was evident in the barrage of criticism that followed the emergence of the new style of playing at competitions. The gradually diminishing number of pipers and listeners who were intimately familiar with the older Gaelic style of playing wondered aloud how their melodious, rhythmic tradition could have been converted into such a dolorous unmusical form.

> "Something must be done to make the pibroch popular it is evident, and the first point is to play the tune as it was originally, a melody – not the monotonous jargon we hear at Highland Games ... (John MacInnes, Oban Times, 1921; Donaldson 2000, 333)
>
> Malcolm MacInnes wrote from Johannesburg agreeing: 'That the opinion is correct requires no further proof than the attitude of every audience, Highland or non-Highland, who find that, with some exceptions the ground is played with such lapses that they wonder what has become of the melody'. He went on that Highland culture had been bedeviled by bungling and deception for centuries,

> from Macpherson's *Ossian* down to 'the "collection" of chants and songs, going on recently', of which 'the greater … quantity is composed and written at the desk and the piano' (a reference to Marjorie Kennedy-Fraser and her associates). Given that intellectual shoddiness had been the hallmark of the mediators of Highland culture, he continued, what reason was there to suppose the Piobaireachd Society would be any different. (Donaldson 2000, 333)

In a letter he wrote in 1938, John MacDonald of Inverness, one of Scotland's leading pipers, also placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of blundering intermediaries with more authority than ability.

> To me, it seems quite evident, from results of the last 15 years that the preservation of our ancient and traditional music, with all its beautiful and melodious airs, and sentiment, has passed into the wrong hands, and it will take a long time, if ever, before it can be restored to its original standard. (Seton Gordon Papers 1939–41; Donaldson 2000, 397)

Had Gaelic society been in a healthy state in Scotland, it is possible that the work of "improvers" such as Campbell and the Piobaireachd Society would have had little effect, but this was decidedly not the case. Gaelic society was in critical decline by the early 20th century. The language was in full-scale retreat in the Highlands, traditional fiddling and dancing had pretty nearly disappeared, and the great piping colleges of the Highlands had been closed for over a century. Out-migration had been bleeding away the population of the Highlands for generations. Additionally, Gaelic-speaking areas in general and the piping community in particular had suffered particularly heavy losses in the First World War, with some 500 pipers killed and 600 wounded. Authority over this formerly Gaelic art form was slipping inexorably southward to rest with non-Gaelic institutions, and the prospects of their members' having any real understanding of the culture from which piping had emerged were weaker than ever.

> After 1925 time had increasingly taken its toll on the representatives of the performer community who remembered how the music had been played in the days before the Society, and who were in a position to question Campbell's settings. The musical literalism promoted by the Piobaireachd Society had been entrenched for nearly a generation and had begun to sound 'normal'. Since its editor alone had access to all the sources it was impossible to mount a challenge to the scores on the basis of the written evidence. Senior players like John MacDonald and Willie Ross had contractual and other ties with the Society which made it difficult for them to oppose it directly. In any case, the livelihood of each depended ultimately on his ability to equip professional pupils to win major prizes at competitions, where the Society's scores were the set texts and the chief judges were likely to be either J. P. Grant or Archibald Campbell or both. And there seems little doubt that this affected what they taught. John MacDonald instructed pupils to play certain things one way while he himself played another, and did not explain why. One source records that Willie Ross's mother had interrupted him 'shouting and banging her walking stick on the floor. "Rubbish," she yelled. "Do

> you tell me my son is teaching you that rubbish?" and that Willie Ross had said "You know, my mother is quite right. But you say you hope some day to compete and if you want to get prizes that's the way you must play the tune."' G. S. McLennan 'taught others the Piobaireachd Society approach so that they would not be condemned' while maintaining his own style. But, as a result of his wartime service, he died, aged 45, in 1929 and the leading performer voice of the younger generation was lost. Those who continued to protest publicly were branded as 'mavericks' and marginalised. (Donaldson 2000, 395)

By the mid-20th century the Piobaireachd Society's authority was virtually complete. In 1948, Archibald Campbell published *The Kilberry Book of Ceol Mor*, containing 118 competition piobaireachds, which, henceforward, would be the only acceptable standards for competition. John MacDonald, the respected Gaelic-speaking piper in Inverness, quoted earlier, was cited by Campbell as one of the authorities from whom he had developed his settings, but according to one of MacDonald's other students, R. B. Nichol, when he saw what Campbell had done he flew into a rage that Nichol had never before witnessed: "Piobaireachd is dead, Nicol, and *that* is its epitaph!" (R. B. Nichol, 1975; Donaldson 2000, 445)

By the mid-20th century much had changed in the piping world. The Highlands no longer controlled the piping aesthetic at the elite levels of piping (*Ceòl Mór*), and at the popular level, the Lowlands had become a far more important constituency in piping due to their much greater, more concentrated population. In the late 19th century, the pipe band emerged in the Lowlands, introducing new demands on the tradition. Now a solo tradition *par excellence* was translated into the band format. Tunes had to be simplified and further standardized in order for bands to work, and "marching" rather than "dancing" became the music's main function. Now not only *Ceòl Mór* but also *Ceòl Beag* would be chiefly mediated by non-Gaelic centres of instruction.

The pipe band was almost exclusively an urban phenomenon, and right from the outset, the hub for pipe bands was the industrial belt of the Lowlands, particularly Glasgow. Apart from the musical changes that were, of necessity, introduced, the emergence of these bands added increased spectacle to the already heavily romanticized presentation of "Highland" culture. They also encouraged the further development of a bureaucratized structure to organize competitions and instruction. At the same time, the success of the civilian pipe band encouraged the British army to become more heavily involved in pipe bands and as it did, to claim its own share of authority over the tradition. With *Ceòl Mór* cut off from its Gaelic roots, the Highland Games Competition circuit shaping the demand for spectacle, the pipe band refashioning *Ceòl Beag* to meet its own peculiar needs, the Lowlands becoming the main supplier of pipers and a strictly hierarchical infrastructure emerging in the Lowlands and claiming authority over the tradition, the Gaelic piping aesthetic did not have much of a chance for survival in Scotland.

From 1950 on, under the direction of Seumas MacNeill, the centre for those various non-Gaelic forces was to become the College of Piping in Glasgow, which set the standard for piping for the rest of the 20th century and exported its ideas and instructors all over the world. While the English elitist grip on piping had largely been broken, there is little to suggest that the more populist Glasgow-based Scottish officials had any more idea about the Gaelic roots of the piping tradition than their institutional predecessors had. MacNeill was particularly attached to the notion that *Ceòl Mór* had been a form of classical music clearly separated from the rest of the Gaelic musical tradition. In fact, he even went so far as to promote the idea that the MacCrimmons were in reality Italian refugees who had introduced the form of music to Scotland from their native Cremona and that that was why it differed so greatly from what was normally encountered in Gaelic tradition. It was *real* classical music from the cradle of the classical tradition. He was particularly hostile to associations made with Gaelic tradition.

> And remember, there is a danger that those who glamourise the old days (without usually knowing much about the old days of piping) may drag our highly developed and professional piping down to the level of what we hear of the "old Gaelic singing". Forty verses in a nasal twang — "I got it from my auntie" — or as Maurice Lindsay wrote: "The Cracked voice recordings of authentic folk crones." Older is not always better. (Seumas MacNeill, *West Highland Free Press*, 1994)

Like Archibald Campbell before him, MacNeill was suspicious of melodious and rhythmic piping. Instead, he promoted a rigid adherence to written scores (no matter how badly corrupted) and a similar rigid adherence to prescribed fingering technique. And his influence was pervasive both in Scotland and in Canada. The institutional mindset that had been developing in piping over more than a century led to a strange reversal of values — literalism over creativity and prescribed technique over musicality. For example, piping judges saw nothing odd in describing the playing of Dr. Angus MacDonald (of Moidart and Cape Breton) in one competition in the 1980s as "clearly the most musical" and then proceeding to award him fourth place.

None of this should be taken to imply that modern piping is unmusical or that it is hostile to musicality — Dr. Angus MacDonald is, after all, not only regarded as one of the most musical pipers currently playing but is also one of the most respected and successful competitive pipers of all time. Nor is an attempt being made to suggest that modern "schooled" pipers are inferior to traditional "folk" pipers. In fact, such comparison between the two is rather meaningless, since they are playing to quite different internal standards. That is the point. The modern piping establishment has routinely dismissed these Gaelic standards as inferior or even invalid, simply because they are different from its own. Since piping is rooted in Gaelic tradition, and these same authorities continually refer to "tradition" as the source for their authority, this is particularly unjustified. It has also been damaging to Gaelic culture as a whole, since it has actively questioned its competence to set and maintain high standards in the interpretation of its own cultural forms.

As the preceding commentary has attempted to demonstrate, however, there are problems with the adoption of a bureaucratic system for the perpetuation of folk music. Bureaucratic systems are primarily concerned with authority and regulation. Those at the top of the structure wield their authority over others within the system by developing detailed (usually written) regulations. With regard to regulating musical instruction and performance, this tends to place a focus on aspects of music that can be readily defined and readily written down. While such a system may be well suited to engineering or accounting, it is manifestly incapable of dealing with the multitudinous subtleties and ambiguities of art. Nor are aspects of music that can be easily defined and written down necessarily the most important qualities.

Bureaucracies also show a weakness for giving priority to process rather than to results. This is true even of administrative systems that are expected to provide a very specific public service such as education or health care. There is a tendency to focus on internally generated standards rather than on meeting the expectations of the end-user or wider community. At its worst, this bias towards internal accounting and administration procedures can vest considerable authority in figures who do not have much sense of the bigger service they are meant to provide. The top administrative officer in a government educational bureaucracy, for example, may be more skilled in accounting technique than educational philosophy and likely far more familiar with the bureaucratic end of the organization than the service provision end. In modern piping, the depth of this problem is difficult to discern since process and results have largely become the same thing. There is no longer a wider community that the structure serves. The major venues for piping performance are largely internal to the piping bureaucracy itself. The events are organized, staffed, judged (in some instances), and predominantly attended by the pipers who are a product of the system. Ranking of performers is also strictly regulated — again by the piping hierarchy. There is little in the way of an external community demand to meet, and so standards remain the standards of the bureaucracy itself.

All of this has tended to separate the modern piping system from the Gaelic community and to undermine its sense of the deeper values that traditionally governed musical expression there — this despite the bureaucracy's frequent references to "tradition" as ultimate authority for its practices and procedures. Some aspects of the tradition that were once considered supremely important, such as rhythm and were readily learned through the more interactive system of folk education are inherently difficult to define (especially in writing) and inherently difficult to teach using a bureaucratic system. The emphasis on competition in the bureaucratic approach also leads to narrowing of the traditional interpretation. It is extremely difficult to mark different pipers' presentations against one another unless they all play the same tunes — even down to using exactly the same ornamentation. It is also easier to notice a specific mistake in melody than in rhythm, since the latter quality suffuses the entire performance, making it more difficult to make quick and quantitative judgments concerning rhythmic presentation, while scoring a performance. The tendency in such cases is simply to accord the challenging facet less importance altogether. Over time, that emphasis makes the facet of musical expression in question less important among performers. At its extreme, as noted above, normal facets of a healthy musical tradition can come to be seen as quite foreign and intrusive, provoking suspicion and hostility when they appear.

Within the collective consciousness of a folk culture such a development is unlikely. Everyone, and not just artists, is immersed in cultural art forms from the time of their birth to the time of their death. The society internalizes an enormous set of complex and often quite subtle standards regarding the presentation of these arts. Interaction between the musician and this well-informed community is constant and intimate. The community expects pipers to deliver a functional community service and to a very high standard, and pipers know that their reputation will be won or lost based on how well they provide that service. Because there is no formal, standardized method of training, there is little emphasis on process, but because the audience is knowledgeable and actively engaged with the music (for example, as dancers), a great deal of emphasis is placed on result. The power to set standards never rests with a small few but is invested in the larger cultural community.

In the traditional context, this functional orientation is critical. A piper would no more be deemed excellent based on some narrow, esoteric definition of "good technique" than a runner, who finished well back in a race, be awarded first place for demonstrating an arbitrarily-determined more elegant style of running than his fellow racers. The traditional piper, therefore, is allowed greater diversity of technique and musical interpretation but must still conform to a well-defined idiom with very high standards. Unfortunately, the modern piping system has tended to define "excellence" entirely through its own internally generated, less functionally oriented standards and to dismiss the Gaelic tradition as inferior. This has played a role in undermining the older tradition in Scotland and in Canada.

Nova Scotia lacked any sort of landed Gaelic aristocracy — particular the kind that might have had pretensions to mediate the presentation of the Gaelic arts. However, that did not stop the landed aristocracy in Scotland from indirectly influencing the direction piping would take in the province. By 1810, the Highland Society of London, the major institutional force in 19th-century Scottish piping, already had branches in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. (Donaldson 2000, 65) By the second half of the 19th century, numerous such organizations, like the North British Society, founded in Halifax in 1767, and usually prominently represented by the most anglicized sector of the Scottish population, were sponsoring the same sorts of piping competitions as could be found in Scotland, encouraging pipers to wear the same sort of costumes as their Scottish counterparts and developing the same Highland games pageantry, though with more of a local aesthetic, since they had to put these events together largely without the British royalty and aristocracy to directly guide them.

Lacking such direct manipulation of the tradition, these events were not particularly influential in shifting the foundations of the piping tradition in the 19th century, but they were preparing the ground. In his tour of Canada in 1879–80, Alexander MacKenzie of the *Celtic Magazine* noted that Canadians had enthusiastically imported the Highland games model from Scotland but not the piping style.

> "In Canada, says the late Mr. Alexander MacKenzie, the jumping, tossing the caber, stone throwing, and various other Highland competitions, would do credit

> to some of the best athletes at home gatherings, although, he adds, the pipe music was nowhere". (W. L. Manson 297; Gibson 1998, 237)

While Canadians had been able to copy the format of these events fairly easily, duplicating the cultural content was difficult, since they had only the native variety to use as the cultural touchstone. What had been lacking in the Canadian recreations of these modern Scottish events was substantial direct input from the controlling institutions in Scotland.

During the later 19th century, the inability to mimic the Scottish model of piping was attended to, as Scottish pipers (mostly from the Lowlands) trained in the new non-Gaelic style began to appear with surprising consistency in Canada, including Nova Scotia. They were granted almost instant authority over piping matters virtually from their first arrival in the province — something that was undoubtedly due to the fact that they did not, as a rule, immigrate to Gaelic-speaking regions where the more complete sense of Gaelic musicality still prevailed and where demands would have been made on their piping that they would have been manifestly incapable of meeting, such as playing for stepdancers.

Instead, these influential pipers immigrated to urban areas where their Scottish training and champion pedigrees were sufficient to win them instant influence. In those areas, they became leaders of civilian pipe bands (which they often founded); pipe majors in various army bands, which were dominated by British tradition and which dramatically increased in numbers and importance due to two World Wars; prominent instructors, producing local pipers on the Scottish model; and prominent judges, setting the standards for piping throughout the country. It was from urban centres and largely through the aegis of the Highland Games and piping competitions structures that had themselves been imported from Lowland Scotland that these Scottish pipers began extending that influence toward Gaelic Nova Scotia.

David Manson of Ross-shire was one of the first of these new pipers on record. He was a pipe major of the 72nd Highlanders and the Shepherd's Piping Band of Hamilton, as well as a champion Highland dancer. He was recruited by the North British Society of Halifax and took up his piping duties in the capital in 1895. He is remembered to have piped at the first Mabou Picnic in 1897 before leaving Halifax and the North British Society for a more lucrative piping career in Montreal with the Black Watch (Williams 2000, 183). Manson was followed by Pipe Major Robert Thomson Jr. of Jedburgh, who immigrated to Halifax in 1896 where he found employment as a builder and contractor. He started Thomson's Famous Pipe Band and also appears to have been involved with the North British Society in a piping capacity by 1910 (Williams 2000, 242). Thomson brought over Pipe Major George Dey of Bonniebridge in 1906 as a full-time instructor and player for the band. He became a prominent instructor and judged at events like the Antigonish Highland Games (Williams 2000, 40–42). By 1910, Pipe Major James Cant of Broughty Ferry was also in Halifax. Like Dey he founded several pipe bands in the province and was a prominent instructor and judge of piping competitions (including, also, the Antigonish Highland Games), seemingly from his earliest arrival (Williams 2000, 28). Pipe Major John "Jock" Carson was also in Halifax by 1914 (Williams 2000, 30). Other pipers such as Sandy Russell of Dundee and Pipe Major John "Jock" Jamieson of Musselburgh came to work in the Cape Breton coalfields but also earned money as piping instructors, Russell in Inverness by 1901 and Jamieson in Inverness and later Donkin by 1926 (Williams 2000, 222, 83). Others could be found in industrial Pictou County, in New Glasgow and Stellarton, and in Truro. The fact that almost all of these mediators of this supposedly "Highland" art were from the Lowlands and had little, if any, direct exposure to Gaelic culture did not strike anyone as odd.

This colonial pattern (occurring even more strongly elsewhere in Canada) of pipers stepping off the boat from Scotland and assuming positions of commanding authority in the emerging piping institutional infrastructure would be repeated again and again, right down to the present day, but its effects were already noticeable by the beginning of the century, particularly in other parts of Canada. W. L. Manson, writing in 1901 noted that there had been a significant improvement in the quality of pipers in the country since Alexander MacKenzie's visit some 20 years earlier.

> Since he travelled through Canada, however, there have been great improvements, and the visits of leading pipers and dancers have borne good fruit. Canada now has her own Highland pipers and dancers, reared on her own soil but on the home model, not perhaps as good as the best at home, but better than average. (Manson 297; Gibson 1998, 237)

As John Gibson noted, however good these new pipers might have been at their own style of playing, they were incapable of functioning in Nova Scotia's Gaelic cultural milieu and equally incapable of understanding the richness of its Gaelic musical traditions.

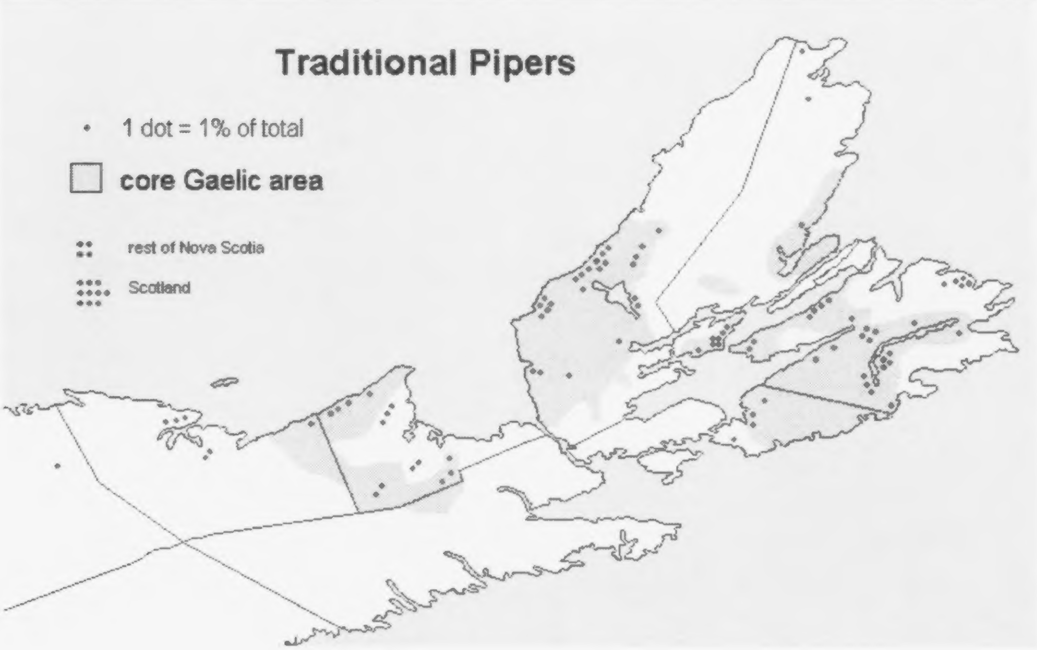
> The Scottish piping world of 1900–20 .... would [not] stop to consider that the Old and New World Gàidhealtachds still existed and harboured irreplaceable links with the older piping functions and tradition. It would have drawn a deep breath and raised a querulous eyebrow had it seen and heard Black Angus MacDonald of Mount Young or Allan MacFarlane piping for one of the Gillis step-dancers at an Inverness County picnic. It appears that New World Gaeldom, through neglect and isolation, was truer to tradition for longer. ... (Gibson 1998, 251)

Traditional pipers of Nova Scotia were separated from the emerging piping institutions both by geography and, ironically enough, by their Gaelic language and culture. The incoming pipers moved easily in English-speaking urban society where knowledge of the Gaelic musical traditions in the rural environs was not particularly strong. Instead of looking to these rural traditions, well-meaning urbanites through various agencies sought to bring what was believed to be traditional piping to the widest possible audience.

> If there was an honest sense that it would be better to replace what was being lost in the "Highland" regiments and in Highland society by some literate form of piping than by nothing, then it is not difficult to understand the wish to spread the new piping wherever there were Scots. That, indeed, is the innocent and enthusiastic attitude that still flourishes in all parts of Canada. (Gibson 2000, 222)

> Unquestionably the only areas of the world that could retain Gaelic traditionalism in the face of the piping renaissance that Stephen MacKinnon rightly described [1900–20] could have been the heartland Gaelic-speaking areas, home of unilingual Gaels, where the older consciousness was not easily challenged. (Gibson 2000, 252)

A distinct pattern began to emerge in Nova Scotia that is still noticeable today. Gaelic traditional piping continued on, largely unaffected by the new style of piping in its Gaelic rural heartlands. It was played for pleasure and for dancing and was generally passed on aurally. Pipers frequently displayed the wider Gaelic musical and cultural skills so often encountered in Gaelic society; many were fiddlers, stepdancers, singers, and poets in the Gaelic tradition. They generally made their homes in the core Gaelic district of Nova Scotia but also with important early representation in former Gaelic areas such as Pictou.



However, as those Gaelic heartlands began to contract, and as the Gaelic language began to lose prestige, and the older, more confident musical sensibilities began to erode, traditional piping lost ground accordingly. The Gaelic language and traditional piping began to suffer from many of the same negative characterizations — that they were backward, unsophisticated, rural pursuits and that their practitioners were illiterate and not really technically "correct" in their presentations.

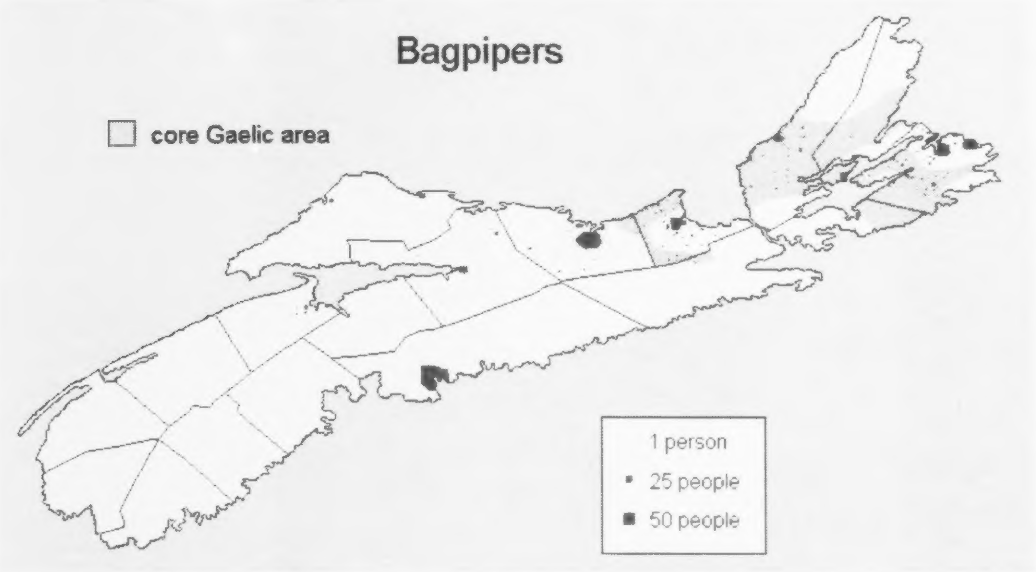
The fact that traditional players could produce good music was not as important as the fact that they did not use the properly prescribed fingering. The fact that they could commit enormous repertoires of music to memory and learn tunes aurally with amazing speed and accuracy was not as important as the fact that most could not read music. The fact that they could play for step dancers all night long was not as important as the fact that they could not win prizes in piping competitions where their style of playing was not even recognized. The fact that the modern-style pipers were utterly useless as traditional dance players was excused with the convenient explanation that such playing was "beneath them" and that, besides, traditional Scottish Gaelic dance in Nova Scotia was Irish anyway. Throughout the 20th century, traditional piping continued to be denigrated and to contract along with the borders of Nova Scotia's Gaelic heartlands before it effectively disappeared at the end of the 20th century with the death of Alex Currie of French Road, Cape Breton County.

The modern style of piping, on the other hand, flourished in the 20th century. Backed up by a confident and increasingly well-organized, urban-based infrastructure, the modern Lowland style of piping spread widely from its Scottish base to Canada and beyond. It was aided in no small measure by two World Wars and the corresponding high degree of contact traditional pipers from all over the Commonwealth had with the British army piping infrastructure and its rigid authority structures. However, the modern Lowland style of piping was not building on the strength of local Gaelic culture anywhere but rather was establishing itself in English-speaking urban centres where Gaelic culture was weak or absent.

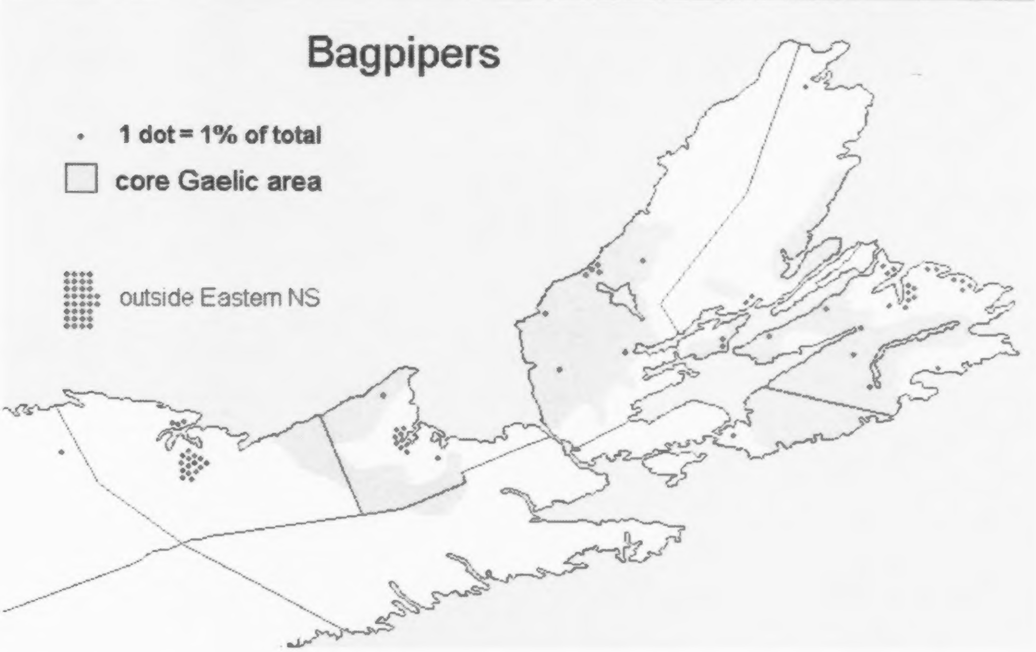
It is no coincidence that Nova Scotia, indisputably the strongest Gaelic cultural region in North America, consistently failed to produce champion pipers and Highland dancers as successfully as Ontario or British Columbia. Neither is it a coincidence that within Nova Scotia, it has been the areas from which Gaelic disappeared the fastest or where it never had any presence in the first place that the modern style of piping has put down the fastest and deepest roots. Industrial Pictou County, for example, has been one of the stronger piping districts in the province over this century in spite of (and probably because of) the fact that Gaelic and the Gaelic musical arts had virtually disappeared from the county by the beginning of the 20th century

> Despite the fact that Gaelic, and with it cultural traditionalism, lasted longest in Pictou County in settlements like Churchville, Springville, and Gairloch, which were far enough away from the industrial area to be almost isolated, there is a lack of evidence that Gaelic traditional piping survived long into the century there. (Gibson 2000, 195)

In fact, when plotted on a map, the correlation between this supposedly Gaelic art form and the strongest Gaelic areas in Nova Scotia this century is only a little more than ten per cent. It is evident from the data that piping was practiced throughout rural Gaelic Nova Scotia, as our earlier map demonstrates, and our anecdotal evidence suggests that the style of piping in these districts fit into the wider Gaelic folk culture quite seamlessly. However, with the exception of a pipe band that was established in rural Iona briefly in the 1970s (and it is worth noting that the band did not do particularly well in competition but was noted as quite "musical"), the modern piping infrastructure has been built on urban centres where Gaelic was comparatively weakly represented, if at all, this century — industrial Cape Breton, Inverness, Antigonish Town, Stellarton, New Glasgow, Pictou, Pugwash, Amherst, Truro, Kentville, and Halifax. These are the current areas of piping strength in the province and have become the mediators for Nova Scotia's piping tradition.



Just how weak the correlation was between formal pipe band training and the core Gaelic areas of the province can be seen in the larger scale map of eastern Nova Scotia.



Regrettably, with some notable exceptions, the goal of the piping establishment in Nova Scotia over the past century has not been to explore Nova Scotia's rich Gaelic tradition and cultural aesthetic, but to copy, as closely as possible, the prescribed style laid out by institutions in the Scottish Lowlands. There is, of course, no reason why this new style of piping could not have existed side by side with the more traditional form or why Nova Scotian pipe bands could not have based their style on the Gaelic aesthetic and developed a unique Nova Scotian sound. Unfortunately, the philosophical underpinnings of the new style of piping were generally antithetical to such a concept. The most prominent members of the piping establishment in Scotland were not only frequently ignorant of Gaelic culture but also tended to be intolerant of the challenge its aesthetic provided to their own brand of "traditionalism." Proponents of the modern style in Scotland claimed ultimate and indisputable authority over the tradition and sought to legitimize their stylistic innovations (or blunderings, depending on one's perspective) through reference to an almost apostolic line of pipers, which they claimed represented the *only* true link to the past. Quite simply, in that sort of intellectual environment, there was no room for two such radically differing "traditional" styles, and the piping establishment vigorously dismissed the Gaelic style as inferior to its own, in order to establish and protect its authority. Most of what followed in Nova Scotia was purely momentum and, more often than not, well intentioned.

The main line of collision was over the manner in which the modern piping establishment reversed the value system around Gaelic music: elevating musical literacy over the development of a good ear, bare technique over complete Gaelic musicality, and the ability to please judges by rendering exact recreations of what could be corrupt musical scores over the ability to please active participants in the culture, such as by providing creative, functional dance music and tasty interpretations of traditional tunes while remaining within recognized idiomatic boundaries. The experience of two Nova Scotian Gaelic-style pipers, from the first half of the 20th century, John Angus MacDonnell and Daniel MacDonald, is informative. The first, John Angus MacDonnell of Inverness, Cape Breton, received instruction both from Sandy Russell of Dundee and from British-influenced piping instructors in the army but like Gaelic-style fiddlers, he had a strongly ingrained local aesthetic and an intuitive understanding of what the local culture demanded. "According to a report, he was not a technically correct player, but played musically. He often played for step dancers." (Williams 2000, 119)

The fact that Scott Williams' informants cautioned that MacDonnell was remembered as technically deficient in spite of producing good musical results provides a telling insight into the modern piping aesthetic — the fixation on process rather than results. This difficulty distinguishing between *effective* technique and *prescribed* technique often leads people trained in these strictly organized forums to assume that the former can be valid only if it conforms to their experience. One might cite numerous examples of classically trained violinists dismissing the technique of folk-trained violinists and formally trained pipers similarly dismissing aurally trained pipers but being entirely unable to recreate their supposedly simplistic musical sound, in spite of the theoretical superiority of their own technique. Again, this is probably most especially evident in terms of rhythm. Regrettably, often allied to this dismissive attitude, is the sadly mistaken conceit that the trained pipers and violinists *could* easily duplicate the style, if they wished; the belief noted among the elite earlier by Donaldson, that the traditional forms were quite simple and easily mastered.

Modern pipers had excellent technical grounding but so too, in a different way, did good traditional pipers. It is likely that both groups would have enjoyed an equally easy time adapting to the other style, if they had chosen to, but it would have taken a considerable amount of relearning and of rounding out their specific skill sets. Unfortunately, the forum for interaction tended to be dominated by the piping bureaucracy, and it has left only a record of the "weakness" of traditional pipers in mastering its idiom. The experience of Big Ridge native Daniel MacDonald suggests that what is ultimately at issue, however, is not quality of music but conformity to authority.

> According to Arthur Severance, who heard him play, he had a unique style of fingering. The music he would play would make the hair raise on the back of your neck. On one occasion, he competed in a contest judged by Pipe Major David Ferrier, formerly of Scotland but then living in Boston, and he was placed second. Ferrier was said to have remarked that if Dan had been able to read music, he would have given him first, but he just couldn't bring himself to give the man first place over a pipe major who could read music. He agreed that the music Dan played was far superior to what was played by the man who was given the first prize. (Williams 2000, 105)

Within the Gaelic social context, such reasoning would have been dismissed as ludicrous, but where the Gaelic cultural aesthetic was weak or nonexistent, this musical philosophy was able to put down deep roots. In 20th-century Nova Scotia that became an increasingly large area. As in Scotland, the agencies which played the largest part in undermining the Gaelic musical tradition were the very institutions that had supposedly been set up to preserve and promote Gaelic culture — the various Highland and Scottish societies that appeared (and almost as often disappeared) and, most importantly, from the 1950s, the Gaelic College at St. Ann's.

Almost from its earliest beginnings, the Gaelic College fully embraced the modern cultural stylings and stereotypes of Scotland. It largely ignored Nova Scotia's own native Gaelic traditions or gave them a decidedly secondary status and set about introducing one Scottish "expert" after another to help educate local people in the error of their ways. The first was Maj. C. I. N. MacLeod, a native Gaelic speaker from Ross-shire and a trained Celtic scholar. MacLeod was brought over from Scotland in 1949 to teach at the Gaelic College. He was appointed Gaelic advisor to the Nova Scotia Department of Education and travelled widely throughout Gaelic Nova Scotia in that capacity until 1958, when he was appointed associate professor of Celtic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University, where he remained until his death in 1977.

In spite of his qualification as a Gaelic scholar, there is little evidence that MacLeod ever realized that he was in an environment with a richer, more traditional form of instrumental music and dance than he had known in Scotland. He appears to have taken little interest in the Nova Scotian Gaelic musical traditions but instead threw himself into the task of introducing the modern Scottish varieties — piping in the modern style, Highland dance in the *very latest* style, and even Scottish country dance, which had no basis in Gaelic culture whatsoever. While his knowledge of what constituted good examples of traditional piping, fiddling, and dancing was weak, his qualifications as a native Gaelic speaker, as a trained Celtic scholar, as the government's advisor on Gaelic education, and as a professor of Celtic studies and the fact that he was from Scotland all helped give MacLeod an air of authority, as an instructor and as a judge at the various Highland games and competitions held throughout the province.

More significant, by far, was the link the Gaelic College forged with the neophyte College of Piping in Glasgow in the 1950s. Seumas MacNeill, who became the dominant personality at the College of Piping for most of the second half of the 20th century, was brought to the Gaelic College in 1954 (along with Highland dance instructor James L. MacKenzie) to begin his mission to institute the modern Scottish interpretation of this ancient Gaelic art form in North America. George A. Fraser, one his early students, recounted his first meeting with MacNeill at the Gaelic College in the 1950s.

> He remembers the shock they all had when Seumas MacNeill first arrived from Scotland to teach them at the summer school. Seumas listened to them play and then told them that their playing was 'rubbish', that they were not to play their pipes again until he gave them permission to do so. Then he proceeded to start them all right back on the scale. That was the end of open Cs, and the beginning of the awareness of the horrible sin of crossing noises. These young students were the first North Americans to benefit from Seumas MacNeill's summer school teaching, and the day he banned the playing of the pipes was the beginning of a

> new evolution of bagpipe music in North America. His influence was to become widespread, and to last for decades. (Williams 2000, 54)

Like an unfortunately large number of the piping fraternity who were brought to Canada from the Scottish Lowlands, MacNeill had little understanding of the Gaelic culture of his own country (in fact, he demonstrated consistent hostility toward it). One of his dismissive references to Gaelic singing in Scotland has already been noted, and the experience of Wayne Moug of Dartmouth suggests that MacNeill brought with him to Canada the same suspicion of melody and rhythm that his predecessors, such as Archibald Campbell of Kilberry, had been introducing to Scottish piping earlier in the century.

> He had the good fortune to go to Seumas MacNeill's second Thousand Island's School of Scottish Performing Arts, in 1969. Seumas auditioned the students and told them what group they were going to be in. 'I remember I played *Green Hills of Tyrol* and he said that I played it like the song and not like the pipe tune so I had to go to the lower end of the school structure'… (Williams 2000, 194)

MacNeill was characteristically dismissive of any style of playing that did not rigidly conform to the techniques set by the College of Piping and seemed to have a certain hostility toward melody and rhythm. His colonial-style attitudes were equally apparent and reminiscent of Alexander MacKenzie and W. L. Manson several generations earlier. He believed that the musical interpretations he heard in Nova Scotia were largely worthless and that Canadian pipers became worth listening to only after they had been systematically re-taught by Scots, particularly by himself. "I despaired of ever teaching Cape Bretoners to pipe when I first came in 1954, but now Heather MacKenzie of the MacDonald Hundred Pipe Band of Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, has become the best girl piper I've ever heard." (Williams 2000, 146) When the 78th Fraser's Highlanders from Ontario won the World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow in 1987 with the Simon Fraser University Pipe Band from British Columbia placing second, MacNeill similarly took credit for the achievement, ascribing it to, "the improved communications which have taken place in the last few decades" rather than to any native Canadian ability or creativity. (MacNeill, "Summer schools and dedication pave way for Canadian Revolution," *West Highland Free Press* 18 September 1987: 13)

Not all of the increasing numbers of instructors who were brought in from Scotland and later from Ontario and other parts of Canada, where the College of Piping style had taken root, were as dismissive or as hostile to Gaelic tradition — indeed, a small number were Gaelic speakers themselves and strongly rooted in the Gaelic traditions of Scotland — but none were traditional Nova Scotian pipers. Few of the others had any understanding of the older form of Gaelic musicality that existed in Nova Scotia, and the authoritarian nature of their institution did not encourage much inquiry or experimentation.

Unfortunately, with its largely erroneous but nonetheless powerful claim to Highland tradition and its potent and influential organizational support structure, the modern piping style has succeeded in usurping Nova Scotian Gaelic tradition in many important public domains. Certainly, tourism and culture institutions in the province of Nova Scotia have bought into the mythology in a big way and to the detriment of the native culture of the province. Tourism promotion and advertising have relied heavily on the imagery associated with this sort of Highland pageantry and in so doing have elevated its standing even further, helping to further extend the myth of cultural and historical relevance.

At the present time, there exists in Nova Scotia a strong and strongly supported imported tradition of piping with links to external authority in Ontario and Scotland and a much weaker and weakly supported tradition of native, Gaelic-style piping. But there are some promising signs. Developments in modern piping since the 1980s, particularly one might argue in Canada, have demonstrated that creativity and success in the competitive piping scene are not necessarily antithetical. Clearly, even the comparatively rigid authority structures of the modern piping infrastructure can be bent. More importantly, many of the people involved in the modern piping scene in Nova Scotia have considerable sympathy for the traditional Gaelic music of the province to which they have been exposed largely through fiddling and step dancing but also, in rarer instances, through traditional Cape Breton piping. Added to that, improving scholarship in the field of Gaelic culture and piping cannot help but encourage a re-examination of both the historical claims to traditionalism upon which much of the modern piping establishment's authority rests and the possibilities for alternative musical interpretations, including especially an exploration of the music's Gaelic roots. That is already happening both in Scotland and in Nova Scotia.

Piper-scholars such as Barry Shears and John Gibson of Cape Breton have begun shedding light on the long-neglected tradition of piping in Gaelic Nova Scotia through historical examination. This has complemented the earlier work of Gaelic scholars such as John Shaw. Shears and another Cape Breton piper, Allan J. MacKenzie, have each published settings of pipe tunes in the Nova Scotian Gaelic tradition, making these tune settings more widely available and encouraging a more Gaelic-oriented interpretation. Shears and two other Cape Breton pipers, Paul K. MacNeil and Jamie MacInnis, have also recorded in the characteristically rhythmic Gaelic style rather than in the competitive style in which they were all initially trained, as has Scottish piper, Hamish Moore, who developed a love for Cape Breton music. Having these recordings available in an easily accessible commercial form is one of the few ways that younger pipers can get direct aural access to a Gaelic interpretation of Nova Scotian pipe music, given the comparative rarity of piping concerts and dances where the pipes are featured at the moment and the difficulty in getting access to good copies of traditional Gaelic piping recordings.

It is probably no coincidence that the pipers in the vanguard of the rejuvenated Gaelic style of play in Nova Scotia all have strong connections with the Gaelic tradition. Jamie MacInnis and John MacLean, for example, are the sons of well-known traditional Cape Breton fiddlers, Dan Joe MacInnis and Johnny "Washabuck" MacLean, while Paul K. MacNeil is the son of noted Gaelic singer Rod C. MacNeil of Barra Glen. Barry Shears of Glace Bay consciously sought out traditional pipers in Cape Breton, as did Scottish pipers Hamish Moore and Fred Morrison of South Uist. Moore's son, Finn, has also spent many summers in Cape Breton exploring the traditional instrumental musical style. In their move towards the Gaelic style of playing, most of the pipers have been motivated by purely musical concerns, rather than historical authority, finding the Gaelic style of play more challenging and fulfilling. In a recent television interview, John MacLean, who has developed a powerful, driving style eminently suited to dancing, noted the extraordinary lift he got from playing for square dancers at the wedding of fellow piper Paul K. MacNeil and Tracey Dares. Returning piping to its Gaelic context has clearly been a liberating and uplifting experience for him.

Paul K. MacNeil was fortunate in having a long and even more intimate association with Gaelic growing up in Barra Glen. His father is a respected Gaelic singer, and their home was frequently full of Gaelic song and music, including the piping of frequent guest Sandy Boyd, a famous itinerant piper from Scotland. The founding of the Highland Village Pipe Band in the 1970s gave Paul his first direct access to the pipes. Although he noted that the Iona band had a very musical sound but generally did poorly at competitions, he credited the piping infrastructure for developing good technique and for introducing him to many very talented and musical pipers. One of these was Dr. Angus MacDonald of Glenuig, Scotland, one of the top competitive pipers in the world and a native Gaelic speaker then living in Cape Breton, who encouraged Paul with the advice, "Get on to your father." This and Paul's own inclination led him to learn more of the Gaelic language and the song repertoire. The support of Cape Breton fiddlers such as Dave MacIsaac and Theresa MacLellan and the fact that they were noticing the difference in his playing style was an important motivator. Paul has concentrated on learning the rhythms of the Gaelic song tradition and has noted the influence of Dr. Angus MacDonald's brother Allan, another champion piper, Gaelic scholar, and advocate of the importance of the Gaelic song tradition to the instrumental music tradition. The fact that Paul MacNeil has paid such careful attention to this aspect of piping and is so widely respected by Cape Breton fiddlers for the amazing "swing" of his piping, also excellent for dancing, lends weight to the assertion that the Gaelic language (via the song tradition) has had a profound effect on the shaping of the dynamic rhythm of Nova Scotia's Gaelic instrumental music tradition.

At the moment, traditional piping is in the early stages of what may be rejuvenation. There are a small number of excellent young players who are very confident in their Gaelic interpretation and who are winning increasing recognition in traditional music and dance circles. There is also an increasingly large number of young pipers who have come up through the competitive system who are now experimenting with other musical genres such as rock and, of course, traditional Gaelic-style music. Institutional barriers to the Gaelic style of playing seem also to be dropping. The Gaelic College has begun offering an increasing number of courses from Gaelic-style players, such as Hamish and Finn Moore, Fred Morrison, and Allan MacDonald. The recent appointment of John MacLean as head of the Gaelic College pipe band and the hiring of these other Gaelic style instructors by the college already appears to be having a positive influence on younger players. Many of the Gaelic-style Nova Scotian pipers are playing publicly in the informal community context, as one would expect of Gaelic-style musicians, and occasionally playing for square dancing and step dancing. As noted above, this approach to playing also has its strong adherents in Scotland.

Although there have been some excellent piping concerts, such as the annual "Piper's Ceilidh" hosted by *Feis an Eilein* at Christmas Island, performance opportunities remain somewhat limited, and it will probably take some time for the pipes to re-access their former domains. It is a potentially creative and exciting time in the Nova Scotia piping tradition, as local pipers begin to draw from a cultural strength that is nearly unique in the world. With the proper encouragement, Nova Scotia could become a centre of excellence in traditional Gaelic-style piping, the way it has been for generations in fiddling.

Fiddling

The Gaelic fiddling tradition of Nova Scotia is one of the healthiest forms of Gaelic cultural expression in the New World. Although it has gone through its ups and downs and continues to face serious challenges, it is in comparatively robust condition when considered against the overall backdrop of Gaelic culture in the province. It remains relatively popular amongst the young; it has become a source of pride, particularly for the people of Cape Breton, where it has assumed a symbolic status; it has successfully crossed the frontier into other cultural communities, such as the Acadian, Irish, English and Mi'kmaq; and is even being reintroduced into Scotland. Yet, its roots in Gaelic culture are surprisingly poorly understood.

The style of fiddling now usually referred to as "Cape Breton" fiddling has its roots deeply imbedded in Scottish Gaelic tradition. Many stringed instruments similar to the modern violin were played in Scotland, but by about 1660, the violin itself had become the most popular of these, and the others appear to have fallen out of use. Scots very quickly began producing copies of the violins of the great Italian masters, and at a very affordable price, making the instrument accessible to all levels of society. It spread quickly and soon challenged the bagpipes as the most quintessentially Gaelic instrument.

By 1700, the year that Henry Playford published the first collection of Scottish violin music, *A Collection of Scotch Tunes (Full of Highland Humours)*, the violin seems to have been common in even the remotest corner of the Scottish Highlands. One of the last harper-poets in Gaelic society, Roderick Morrison, known as *An Clàrsair Dall* (The Blind Harper), played at the court of the MacLeods of Dunvegan on the Isle of Skye from 1693 to 1706, along with the legendary piper Padraig Òg MacCrimmon, and described a richly musical environment in his poetry, including fiddle music. He was, himself, particularly fond of the violin for dancing. Morrison's father, a well-documented tacksman on the Seaforth Estate on the Isle of Lewis (born c. 1630), was also known to be a violinist. In his tour of the Hebrides c. 1695, Martin Martin personally encountered 18 men on that island alone, the most remote of the Hebrides (and quite strictly Protestant), who could "play fairly well on the violin without being taught." These, and numerous other such pieces of evidence from throughout the 18th-century Highlands, suggest that the violin was penetrating all districts of the *Gàidhealtachd* and all levels of society almost from its first arrival in Scotland and that a robust folk tradition was very quickly absorbing the new instrument. They also lend further support to the argument that

Protestantism did not become hostile to Gaelic secular music until the Evangelical revivals of the 19th century.

Gaels adapted a wide variety of tunes to the violin from their traditional song and instrumental music repertoire. The most fundamental of these, however, were reels and strathspeys. The reel is believed to have originated in France but evolved in a particularly unique and robust fashion in Scotland. Print references to it there appear as early as the 1500s, and it has become inextricably associated with that country. In France, today, the reel is considered a Scottish form of music and dance. The reel appears to have been introduced to Ireland *from Scotland* but was not widely popular there until the late 1700s and early 1800s after migration from the Highlands to Nova Scotia had begun.

The reel in its presently recognizable form probably predates the arrival of the violin, but the evolution of the strathspey — a uniquely Scottish form of music, which takes its name from the *Strath* (valley) of the Spey River in the Scottish Highlands, where this musical form first appeared is roughly coincidental with that of the violin and is particularly strongly associated with that instrument. The strathspey is a variant of the reel — also in 4/4 time but played at a slightly slower tempo and with a spikier rhythm. The forms were considered close enough that in the early years the strathspey was sometimes referred to as the "strathspey reel" while the slightly faster reel was sometimes known as the "Athol reel," the latter taking its name from another region of the Highlands, particularly noted for violin music. The strathspey and the reel also appear to have been the basic forms used for the bulk of the dances done in Gaelic Scotland.

Scottish fiddling enjoyed what has become known as a "golden age" during the 18th century and the early 19th century. Although the violin never became fully integrated into the Gaelic court in the manner the bagpipes had, arriving at a period when such elite institutional culture was in decline, it did enjoy important patronage from some of the great families. The MacLeods of Dunvegan have already been noted. Gaelic-speaking players and composers such as William Marshall from Morayshire and Niel Gow from Perthshire were closely associated with powerful patrons such as the Duke of Gordon and the Duke of Athol but were also clearly playing within a folk-music context. This did not prevent their music from being nearly as much in demand in the Scottish Lowlands and in England as it was in the Highlands. In fact, even some of the great classical composers experimented with distinctive features of Scottish instrumental music, such as the "Scots snap." The strength and popularity of the tradition in Scotland during that period might be very loosely compared with Ireland's dominant position in music and dance in the "Celtic" music scene today. It was this rich, confident tradition of violin music that the earliest Highland immigrants brought with them to Nova Scotia.

The golden age began to wane noticably in Scotland by the 1820s. Stewart of Garth, writing of life in the Highland districts neighbouring Athol, arguably the leading centre for the fiddling tradition when it was at its zenith, spoke of ceilidhs and musical gatherings in the past tense and lamented the dampening influence of a new generation of overly grave, ascetic ministers in the Highlands. He was chronicling the beginning of the great wave of fundamentalism that swept through the Protestant districts of the Highlands and did so much to undermine Gaelic musical traditions. The great families who had patronized the music and who were usually unaffected by these religious trends did, nevertheless, begin turning away from the Scottish tradition in favour of the new forms of music and dance that were being introduced from the European continent following the Napoleonic Wars, such as mazurkas, polkas, quadrilles, and waltzes. A taste for new fashion among the anglicizing elite and a growing trend of religious fundamentalism among the common people helped finish the Golden Age.

Although many regional styles (the Scandinavian-influenced style of the Shetland and the Orkney islands, for instance) remained, the main focal point for Scottish violin music shifted out of the Highlands and into the nearby northeastern Lowlands. Here, the tradition not only evolved in a different cultural and linguistic environment, but was subjected from a very early time to the "improvement" mentality that seemed so prevalent in so many fields in the Lowlands during the 19th century. Rev. James Skinner, a Lowland contemporary of Niel Gow and obviously a minister of the pre-fundamentalist period, wrote stirringly patriotic words to the famous "Reel of Tullochgorm" dismissing "dull Italian lays" and urging his fellow Scots to stay true to what he considered to be their far superior music. His words were not heeded, however, and by the late 19th century, the most influential musician of the day, J. Scott Skinner, was articulating and successfully carrying out his plans to "improve" the Scottish violin tradition by incorporating as much Italian or classical technique as he could manage. He played a large part in pulling the tradition away from its traditional Scottish roots and charting a new direction for its evolution.

Scottish traditional violin music received another blow with the appearance of the piano accordion in the late 19th century. With violin music already shifting towards a smoother more ornate but less powerfully rhythmic style in the Lowlands (as was happening in piping, interestingly enough, and for largely the same reasons) and with the accordion's superior volume, the violin was soon displaced as the principal dance instrument, although it never lost that function entirely. Losing ground in this area, however, the violin tradition became even more susceptible to further classical influence. This introduced substantial differences in the Scottish and Cape Breton styles of playing. "Many Old-World-style Scottish fiddlers today are trained violinists with values and standards derived from classical music, whereas Cape Breton fiddlers are mostly 'folk' or 'traditional' musicians." (Dunlay and Greenberg 1996, 3)

In the Highlands, the classical influence does not appear to have been so strongly supported but the accordion did have the same basic impact that it had in the Lowlands, largely displacing the violin as a dance instrument. Whether this was aided by the decline of the native dance tradition and the arrival of new dance forms from the south, largely through elite channels, in the second half of the 19th century or whether it was the decline of the violin (and to a lesser extent the bagpipes) that helped speed traditional dance to a premature grave cannot be guessed with any confidence. The two traditions would have been so tightly linked that one could not have suffered much change without having a corresponding effect on the other. It is apparent that both were in some trouble by the late 19th century, and references to violinists from that period have an air of crisis about them.

Writing in the late 19th century, for example, Keith Norman MacDonald described a particular group of strathspeys composed on the Isle of Skye and widely known by local fiddlers and encouraged somebody to record them in written form as they seemed poised to disappear. By the early 20th century Highland violinists were exceedingly rare. As musicologist Peter Cooke noted in the School of Scottish Studies series *The Fiddler and His Art* (Scottish Tradition # 9), Scottish fiddle enthusiasts debated whether a distinctive "West Highland Style" had even survived into the modern era. The small number of violinists and the separation of the tradition from an older dance form, such as step dancing, make this a difficult question to answer. Whatever the case, the Highlands have lost the prominent position they once enjoyed in the violin tradition of Scotland.

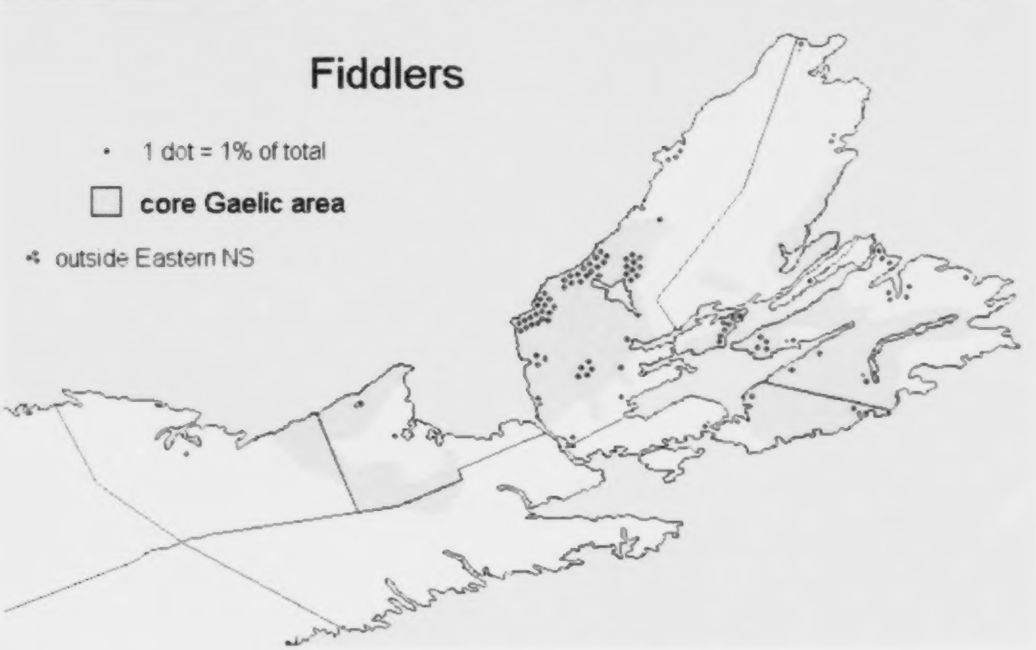
The circumstances for maintaining the dynamic Scottish style of violin music in Nova Scotia were excellent in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Gaels were emigrating in large numbers toward the end of the period of the tradition's greatest vitality in Scotland and establishing large homogeneous communities in rural Nova Scotia where the tradition would be exposed to little significant influence from external sources for generations. Nova Scotia was largely spared the influences external to Gaelic tradition that so dramatically altered the violin tradition in Scotland.

While the degree of isolation of Nova Scotia's rural Gaelic communities has been badly exaggerated in the past by those attempting to explain Gaelic cultural survival there, it is true that these Gaelic communities were not close to large urban centres and so not so susceptible to the influence of changing urban fashions. Neither could an urban-based elite make jaunts to Nova Scotia's *Gàidhealtachd* the way they could from Glasgow, Edinburgh, or other centres in Scotland's urban-industrial belt to the Highlands. Cities like Montreal, Boston, or New York were probably the closest equivalent to a Glasgow in Nova Scotian terms, and they were neither as close to nor as interested in the Nova Scotian *Gàidhealtachd* as Glasgow and Edinburgh were relative to the Highlands. This meant that the spirit of "improvement," which resulted in so much cultural manipulation in the Highlands, was generally restricted to the much smaller urban centres of Nova Scotia and did not have the same strong impact on the rural Gaelic heartland, especially in the 19th century.

The wave of fundamentalist fervour that swept through the Highlands also does not seem to have affected Protestant Gaelic communities in Nova Scotia to quite the same degree, particularly in some areas of Cape Breton. However, it was still significant enough to cause real and notable decline in the secular instrumental music and dance traditions. The degree to which such musical repression was considered an oddity in Catholic areas, by contrast, may be gathered from the fact that one priest who did attempt to stamp out fiddling in the 19th century, Rev. Kenneth MacDonald, is still widely talked of more than 100 years after his death. The fact that Mabou, his former parish, is arguably the strongest area for fiddling and dancing in Nova Scotia today and that so many priests have since been active not only as fiddlers but also as leaders in various initiatives to support the tradition gives some indication of the ineffectual nature of the forces of repression in Catholic Gaelic Nova Scotia. Nevertheless, it is important to note that they did exist.

While fiddling was never driven out of Protestant communities entirely, tradition bearers there had to deal with a decidedly negative environment, and their opportunities for public performance were severely curtailed. In his bibliography of the Gaelic fiddling tradition, *The Cape Breton Fiddler* (which despite the title includes mainland players), Allister MacGillivray identified well over a hundred of the best tradition bearers (mostly of this century), from extensive interviews throughout Nova Scotia. Of those, approximately 93 per cent were Catholic, and only seven per cent Protestant, a figure that corresponds fairly well with data collected from other sources on other aspects of the secular music and dance tradition. Fiddling survived as strongly as it did in Nova Scotia largely because it was not effectively repressed in Catholic Highland communities.

A distribution map of the best fiddlers in the Scottish tradition over the last century based on the tradition bearers identified in *The Cape Breton Fiddler* shows a high correlation with the core Gaelic language areas of the province and reasonably good distribution. The violin is much better represented in Catholic areas than Protestant and much better represented on Cape Breton Island than on the mainland of Nova Scotia, indicating that the strength of local Gaelic tradition *and* religion were factors in the maintenance of the Scottish fiddling tradition. There is also a particularly strong representation in Inverness County, suggesting that the fiddling tradition may have been stronger in the mainland districts of the Highlands than it was in the islands at the time of immigration, since areas such as Mabou, Broad Cove, South West Margaree, Glendale, and Judique were all predominantly mainland Highland settlements. It is worth noting that the disputed modern "West Highland" fiddling style of Scotland is centered on the western-most extreme of this old emigration region, although it does not bear a strong resemblance to the Cape Breton style of playing. The relative strength of Cape Breton in the maintenance of the Scottish Gaelic fiddling tradition of Nova Scotia may be judged by the fact that the style today is usually referred to as "Cape Breton" fiddling even by exponents of the art from the Nova Scotian mainland.



In spite of the rootedness of the fiddling tradition in Scottish Gaelic culture, there have been some remarkable claims about its origins. One reputable American journal of ethnomusicology concluded that the dominant fiddle style of the Maritimes was French (noted by Jim Hornby in, *The Fiddle on the Island: The Fiddle Tradition on Prince Edward Island*, MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982: 4). This has been perhaps the most extraordinary of the various claims, considering the degree of impact that Gaelic instrumental music has had in French Canada. Québec folklorist Ernest Gagnon stated that French Canadians maintained a large French song repertoire but not an instrumental one:

> … the purely instrumental music, the music of the uniquely popular Canadian instrument, the violin, is in our days exclusively English, Scottish or Irish; those are the dance tunes, the jigs, the reels, the hornpipes, — nothing of which is French. (Hornby 1982, 5)

This has also been the consensus among Acadian scholars who have commented on fiddling (Hornby 1982, 5). Moreover, within the Cape Breton music context it has been a notable feature of the spreading of the tradition beyond cultural boundaries that other ethnic groups have continued to regard it as "Scottish" music. Nicknames such as Winston "Scotty" Fitzgerald or Paddy "Scotty" LeBlanc are implicit testimony of this, while more explicit evidence is given in more carefully considered commentary, such as Mi'kmaw fiddler Wilfred Prosper's modest claim that he hoped that his interpretation of the traditional Cape Breton fiddling style found favour with the "Scottish people." (Interview by Marianne Jewel)

In spite of such evidence (not to mention the claim of French origins), other ethnomusicologists have been equally confident that the Gaelic style of fiddling in Nova Scotia is Irish. Indeed, this dismissive claim is routinely encountered in Scotland itself, particularly in the Lowlands, possibly due to the fact that the survival of a more conservative version of Scottish Gaelic music in Nova Scotia poses some serious challenges to Scottish claims to authority over all aspects of "Scottish" culture and is, understandably, unsettling. Some enthusiastic Scottish proponents of the "Cape Breton" style of fiddling are not always especially sensitive to this and may be inadvertently polarizing opinion among their countrymen. While at least closer to the realm of possibility, the claim of Irish origins for the Cape Breton fiddling tradition also demonstrates a serious lack of effort in analysis. Ethnomusicologist Kate Dunlay and her husband, David Greenberg, a noted Baroque-style violinist who has developed a fluent command of the Cape Breton violin style, have made a much more careful study of Cape Breton fiddling, concluding not only that it is fundamentally different from the Irish style, but that in some aspects it is less closely similar to it than is the modern Scottish style:

> The articulated bowing style of Cape Breton fiddlers is in sharp contrast to the legato bowing of most contemporary Irish fiddlers (with some exceptions in the northern part of Ireland). Even in Scotland there is more use of the slur than in Cape Breton. Although there are no treatises to explain the bowing of early traditional Scottish fiddling, there is one key description of the playing of the legendary Niel Gow. In 1802, Alexander Campbell, a contemporary of Gow, wrote that Gow's "manner of playing his native airs is faithful, correct, and spirited. He slurs none, but plays distinctly, with accuracy, precision, and peculiar accentuation." (Emmerson 1971, 177) Although this passage can be interpreted in different ways, it is clear that Gow's bowing was articulated. Regarding the use of slurs, Simon Fraser commented in 1816 that "ordinary performers on the violin are not ready to take up ... [pipe reels] as they require a distinct bow to each note. (Dunlay and Greenberg 1996, 12)

Dunlay and Greenberg suggested that the distinctive style of the modern Cape Breton violin tradition has roots at least as old as the emigration era.

> … some of the ornamentation found in Cape Breton fiddling today resembles the ornamentation of Baroque violin playing, and probably reflects the way Highland fiddlers were playing at the time they emigrated. (Dunlay and Greenberg 1996, 4)

Claims that the "Cape Breton" fiddle style is Irish or French or some exotic amalgam of styles bluntly contradict a large amount of musical evidence that could be brought to bear and are symptomatic of the generally shoddy approach that has been taken to research on Gaelic subjects by scholars unfamiliar with the Gaelic language and its rich oral tradition. Characterizing Scottish Gaelic culture and tradition as little more than an offshoot of Irish culture, however, is a problem that has long been evident *within* Gaelic scholarship. To a certain extent, Gaelic Scotland has been treated as a lesser Ireland, a point Irish scholars have often noted with regret themselves. Colm Ò Baoile has noted, for instance, that his colleagues were very much guilty of ignoring the fact that an integrated Gaelic social structure existed in the Scottish Highlands for a full century and a half after it collapsed in Ireland and that Scotland, therefore, had much to offer scholars seeking to more fully understand the shared Gaelic culture of the two countries. Other Irish scholars have expressed a similar regret that not more attention has been paid to Scottish Gaelic culture in the more modern era for these very reasons. It should be noted, however, that it was Irish scholarly interest in Scottish Gaelic culture that was critical in encouraging this exploration in Scotland itself — for example the contribution the Irish Folklore Commission made to the founding of the School of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh University. Despite this, there remains the problem that in many circles Scottish Gaelic culture is often treated as a lesser, paler reflection of Irish culture.

In Nova Scotia, it was the Scottish Gaels and not the Irish who were the most conservative bearers of Gaelic tradition — a fact at least partly reflected in the 1901 census, which enumerated 50,000 Scottish Gaelic speakers as compared to only 500 Irish. The idea that this smaller, more rapidly anglicizing group should have a significant impact on the violin tradition of a much larger, much more Gaelic-rooted group, who were in the midst of a "golden age" in their own tradition seems more than a bit of a leap of faith, particularly in light of the fact that the most distinctive forms of the music that have survived — reels and strathspeys — were distinctively Scottish (the strathspey was never adopted in Ireland). Such a claim also makes it very difficult to explain why it is that the areas of greatest musical strength in the province correlate almost exactly with the areas of greatest Scottish Gaelic cultural strength and have no correlation with Irish settlement districts.

Claims downplaying the Scottishness of Cape Breton's Gaelic traditions also ignore a huge body of Gaelic oral tradition (much of which has come into English), that discusses various aspects of those traditions from their earliest days in Nova Scotia and gives solid evidence of continuity with the time of migration from the Highlands. The current Minister of Tourism and Culture, the Hon. Rodney MacDonald, a traditional Cape Breton fiddler and stepdancer, for instance, can identify 40 fiddlers, pipers, and step dancers in his lineage going right back to 18th-century Lochaber, Scotland. It is unfortunate that this oral tradition and the social context of life in Gaelic Nova Scotia and Scotland continue to receive scant attention in the formulation of theories about the province's Gaelic musical tradition.

In its new setting in Nova Scotia, the Scottish violin tradition continued to evolve in a thoroughly Gaelic environment. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the main forum for learning and playing remained the ceilidh house, where violin music rubbed up against Gaelic song, piping, dancing, and a host of other traditions on a regular basis. Indeed, it was not at all uncommon to find fiddlers who could also play the pipes, step dance, and sing Gaelic songs. Most fiddlers (including even the older generation of fiddlers currently active) learned their early tunes not only from exposure to violin music but from more frequent exposure to Gaelic singing in their homes. Mothers and other female members of the household singing *puirt a beul* (mouth music) while working around the house are frequently noted as having provided the first and most extensive exposure future fiddlers got to the instrumental tunes they would later learn to play on the violin. This, as well as the violin's continuing important role as a dance instrument in Nova Scotia, is likely chiefly responsible for the Gaelic fiddle tradition's characteristic driving rhythm and flavour.

Learning tunes from Gaelic singers, from pipers, and from other fiddlers, Scottish violin players in Nova Scotia developed a remarkable ear for music as well as quick and retentive memories. Willie Kennedy of Mabou, a violinist noted for his richly ornamented style of playing, remembered attending dances in his native Kenloch in his youth and being able to pick one tune out of the scores he would hear that night and remember it well enough to play it on the violin when he got home. "Once I put it on the violin, I had it!" (Interview, Willie Kennedy: March 2001)

Fiddlers were aided in this process by their long years learning the fundamental sounds that gave the tradition its unique style. In Mabou, Angus "Johnnie Ronald" Beaton, a note-reading piper, played a tune directly from sheet music to his brother Donnie, an ear-playing fiddler who was able, upon one hearing, to play the tune back to him not only correctly and completely but also adapted entirely into the Gaelic style through the addition of the appropriate ornamentation. More recently, Dave MacIsaac noted the same ability in Theresa MacLellan, a traditional ear-learned, Gaelic-style player from Cleveland, Cape Breton, who has also learned to read music, remarking that she could take a tune out of a book and make it sound like she composed it.

Having this strong store of intellectual resources made it easier to function within the Gaelic tradition, allowing for individual creativity and expression while maintaining cultural integrity. Similarly, new ideas from outside the Gaelic milieu, such as tunes from other sources, could be absorbed smoothly into the local Gaelic style, in much the same fashion that one language can effortlessly add vocabulary from another. Having this solid Gaelic foundation in place became increasingly important in the 20th century as the prevalence of published musical collections and recordings exposed fiddlers to a wider variety of foreign material than they had been accustomed to in the strictly aural tradition.

Today, most Cape Breton fiddlers are able to read music but treat the skill as an archival one, which gives them access to a greater variety of tune sources, rather than as a prescriptive one, which dictates the style in which tunes should be played. Cape Breton fiddler Carl MacKenzie, for instance, strongly advocates the development of a good ear prior to the learning of note reading. In effect, MacKenzie is acknowledging the importance of developing the Gaelic intellectual music foundation before working on specific technical skills. This philosophy and the intuitive understanding that the written score is not authoritative are widely evident where Gaelic traditional music is still played.

> … even the greatest advocates of musical literacy appreciate that there is more to good fiddling than accurate note-transmission. This fact, combined with the common difficulty in obtaining rhythmic knowledge from notation, makes the notes more of a finding aid to the tune than a prescriptive system … (Hornby 1982, 142)

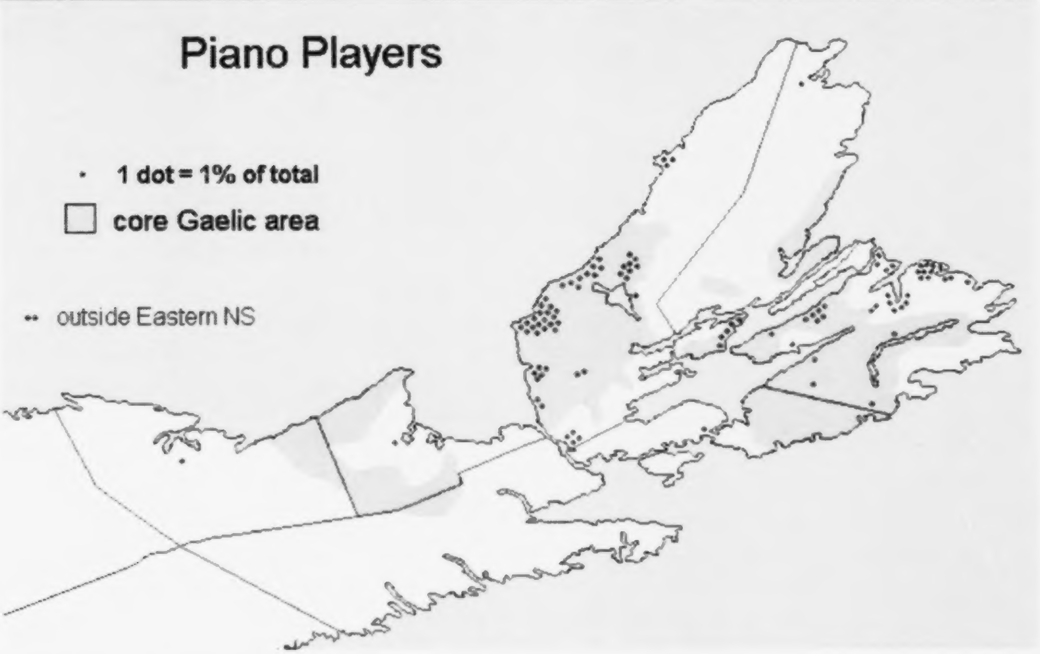
Besides the intimate and informal setting of the ceilidh house, there were a wide variety of other opportunities for performance, and the violin was pressed into service by fishermen waiting on nets and tides, by farm workers and lumbermen lightening days of heavy labour, by communal work parties celebrating the successful end of a "frolic" or "bee" with a dance, by celebrants at weddings and mourners at wakes and funerals. In the late 19th century the violin's performance context expanded. The beginning of the first "parish picnics" in the late 19th century, the precursors of today's many outdoor concerts, began to make new demands on the violin. The appearance of the parish picnic coincided with the appearance of community halls, which became popular venues for dancing.

The larger size of the community halls and of the crowds surrounding the outdoor stages and dance floors that were built for the parish picnics meant that fiddlers had to produce more volume than had been necessary in the past. Several strategies were employed. One was to use "high bass" tuning. This was one of several alternative methods of tuning that had been used to enhance flavour in certain keys but also improved projection. Another method was to double up with a second fiddler. On certain tunes, the second fiddler could double the melody an octave lower than the lead fiddler, giving an exciting effect as well as increasing volume. A third method (and probably the most effective) was to use accompaniment.

In the 19th century, there does not appear to have been much in the way of accompaniment for violin. One unusual form of accompaniment that has been noted was the use of knitting needles to strike the strings in a snappy rhythm as the fiddler played. *Puirt a beul* (mouth music) was occasionally sung in tandem with the violin, and in other instances several listeners might drone in the key signature or the corresponding chord, giving something of a bagpipe effect. This "drone" became a more regularized form of accompaniment with the appearance of parlour organs in the late 19th century. By the early decades of the 20th century, parlour organs began to give way to pianos, and the modern "Cape Breton" violin sound was born.

Pianos provided sufficient volume to support the violin very effectively in the new larger venues it was accessing. The dynamic style of accompaniment that evolved came directly out of the Gaelic tradition but was unique to the New World. Early pianists had no one to learn piano accompaniment from and so developed a style of their own, which was very closely modeled on the Gaelic musical scale and on the Cape Breton violin style. Some even learned to play the melodies, improvising ways to mimic all the complex ornaments used by violinsts, including the rapid three-note "cut." At least one concession was made, however. Many older fiddlers played tunes based on the bagpipe scale rather than on the classical scale, which to a classically oriented ear, gave them an occasionally flat or sharp pitch, known in Cape Breton as playing "in the cracks". A fretless instrument such as the violin can handle that scale easily, but the piano cannot, since its keys are rigidly fixed on the classical scale. Highly skilled players were able to leave out the clashing note when constructing the appropriate chords while accompanying such tunes, but others could not make the adaptation, and that appears to have encouraged adaptation on the part of the fiddlers instead, leading to a move away from the older scale. Apart from that change, the marriage has proved a very popular one over the last century or so. Most fiddlers today would not consider playing without piano accompaniment, despite the fact that amplification has removed the need for such support.

The distribution of piano accompanists in Cape Breton is similar to that of fiddlers, indicating the close connection between the two art forms. However, its approximately 65 per cent correlation with the core Gaelic zones in the province is somewhat lower than fiddling's nearly 80 per cent correlation. This is explained by a much higher representation of the art form in the urban areas — particularly in industrial Cape Breton where a great many Gaelic tradition bearers were immigrating from their rural homes — and a much lower rate of success in identifying the place of origin for these piano accompanists compared to similar immigrant fiddlers and stepdancers. A proportion of the pianists currently plotted outside the core Gaelic areas were almost certainly originally from these districts and learned their playing there, but it has not been possible to confirm the origins of all the pianists in industrial Cape Breton. Inverness County is once again a stronghold for this art form in Nova Scotia.



By the 20th century, if not before, the violin had become the most popular instrument in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Legendary players were active throughout rural eastern Nova Scotia, and thousands of new tunes were being composed by Nova Scotians to go with the old Scottish tunes that had been preserved so faithfully. By the 1930s commercial recordings of the Gaelic fiddling style were being made with Antigonish County fiddlers Colin J. Boyd of Lakevale, and Hugh A. MacDonald of Lanark and Dan J. Campbell, Angus Chisholm, and Angus Allan Gillis fiddlers of Inverness County leading the way. Besides the commercially available recordings, which became increasingly common as time went on, there were countless home recordings on everything from wire spool to reel to reel and eventually to cassette, video, and CD.

The period from 1900 to 1945 produced many of the legendary players and composers still well remembered in Nova Scotia's Gaelic fiddling tradition, but there were also signs of stress. In the United States, there was widespread concern that the various fiddling traditions of that country were on their way to the grave. Men such as industrialist Henry Ford took a great interest in traditional music and sponsored events designed to encourage "old-time" fiddling. Moved by similar sentiment, the Intercolonial Club of Boston (a club for expatriate Canadians) sponsored an "old-time" fiddling competition in the city in 1926. With Canadians constituting the largest immigrant group in Boston in the early 20th century, and most hailing from the Maritimes, it is not surprising that the call should go out to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island to send down their best players or that the competitions and concerts that followed should draw thousands of enthusiastic listeners. The first competition was disputed, and in the second, Mick MacInnis of Glengarry in Cape Breton County edged out Neil Cheverie, a Scottish Gaelic-style fiddler from Elmira in eastern Prince Edward Island (descended from the MacPhee pipers of South Uist) for top honours.

Ironically enough, the large numbers of Nova Scotians and Prince Edward Islanders in Boston who contributed to the success of the fiddling contest of 1926 were also largely responsible for introducing to the Maritimes the same new fashions from the United States that were causing such concern among American fans of "old-time" music. A whole series of the very latest examples of big city "sophistication" were brought north to compete with the native traditions of Gaelic Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. New tune genres such as polkas and waltzes, which had helped end the golden age of fiddling in Scotland a hundred years earlier, as well as Irish jigs and other forms of music now contended with the traditional Scottish strathspeys and reels in the New World environment, while a similar struggle took place in dance with the appearance of waltzes, foxtrots, and quadrilles. The supply of constantly changing fashions coming north seemed to be endless, and as Nova Scotia entered the 1950s and '60s, the Gaelic fiddling tradition, like Gaelic itself, began to noticeably fail.

Gaelic society was entering a period of profound change, generally, in the post-war era, and social patterns were changing dramatically. The Gaelic language was in rapid decline and its ancient cultural arts were faltering — stigmatized as backward and outdated in the face of the new imports — radio, rock-and-roll, television, and a host of other new fashions. By the 1960s, fiddling even in Cape Breton was in critical decline, and very few young players were taking up the bow. The few young people who did take an interest in the music, like fiddlers Kinnon Beaton and John Morris Rankin of Mabou or pianist Betty Lou (MacMaster) Beaton of Judique, sister to renowned fiddler Buddy MacMaster, did not advertise their involvement in traditional music for fear of ridicule. In fact, by 1971, the situation had grown so grim that the CBC's Ron MacInnis produced a documentary entitled *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*, drawing attention to the imminent extinction of the timeless Gaelic art form.

The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler caused a sensation in Cape Breton. Led by the redoubtable Rev. John Angus Rankin, a Gaelic-speaking traditional musician, fiddlers and lovers of the music rallied together, forming the Cape Breton Fiddler's Association to help revitalize the art. They encouraged pride in the tradition, coaxing older tradition bearers to return to the fiddle and organizing instruction to bring younger fiddlers into the fold. The appearance of more than 100 fiddlers on stage at the Glendale Concert in 1973 was a testament to their success and to the latent strength still evident in the tradition, despite serious decline for more than a generation. It demonstrated what the Gaelic community could do when properly motivated and marked a turning point for the fiddling tradition. Fiddling and the associated dancing traditions strongly rebounded in the 1970s.

The success of the fiddle revival movement is undeniable. Compared to its low point in the 1960s, the Gaelic style of fiddling is in a robustly healthy state today. The violin has become so widespread again that even visitors from areas with their own strong fiddling tradition have been struck by the large number of fiddlers in rural Cape Breton. When putting together a series for Channel 4 television in Britain investigating the Scottish fiddling tradition in North America, Shetland fiddler Ally Bain concluded in the liner notes to the accompanying series of cassette tapes that Cape Breton must have had the highest proportion of fiddlers on the planet. The fact that there are roughly 2,000 Gaelic events going on in Nova Scotia in any given year and that most involve fiddle music support this assertion.

Besides sheer numbers of players (and critically, a large number of young players), the Gaelic style of fiddling has become a source of pride once again, particularly in Cape Breton. Today, Cape Breton fiddlers are in demand around the world, and fiddlers such as Natalie MacMaster or Ashley MacIsaac have become household names across the country. The untimely death of Mabou fiddler John Morris Rankin last year was noted as a tragedy for Canada by the Prime Minister, while Judique fiddler Buddy MacMaster was recently awarded the Order of Canada by the Governor General. Such prestigious recognition of the tradition could not have been imagined in 1971 when *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler* was produced.

(Cape Breton fiddler Buddy MacMaster receiving the Order of Canada; photo courtesy of the Inverness *Oran*)

In addition to performance demands, Cape Breton fiddlers are frequently asked to instruct. More than 40 individuals and institutions in Nova Scotia currently offer instruction in Cape Breton fiddle including the Gaelic College and more recently the Ceilidh Trail School of Music in Inverness, founded by Janine Randall, a native of Boston with roots in Inverness. Both of these music schools attract scholars from across the continent and further abroad. In the latter case, a scholarship program affords the opportunity for local learners to attend the school free of charge. Cape Breton fiddlers are also invited to instruct at similar institutions throughout North America and, more recently, in Scotland.

Alasdair Fraser, one of Scotland's leading fiddlers, was so struck by what he heard in Cape Breton and so convinced that it represented Gaelic musical sensibilities, particularly with regard to rhythm, that had been lost in Scotland that he invited Buddy MacMaster (and later Cape Breton stepdancer Harvey Beaton) to join him as an instructor at *Sabhal Mòr Ostaig*, the Gaelic College on the Isle of Skye. This was the first time a Cape Breton fiddler was formally engaged to teach Scottish fiddling in Scotland, and Fraser met with both enthusiasm and hostility. He remarked that some dismissed the tunes as new and "Canadian," while being unaware that much of the repertoire was published in the old Scottish collections but had been ignored in Scotland for generations. (Peter Murphy, *Buddy MacMaster: The Master of the Cape Breton Fiddle*; SeaBright Murphy Video Productions, 1991)

Like Fraser, Scottish piper and pipe maker Hamish Moore was struck by the music and dance traditions of Cape Breton during an early visit and eventually established a Gaelic arts course on the island of South Uist in Scotland, which he called *Ceòlas* — a combining of the Gaelic words *ceòl* (music) and *eòlas* (knowledge). Moore's goal was to try to similarly combine the various Gaelic art forms — Gaelic, Gaelic song, piping, fiddling and dancing — in order to give the wider sort of exposure to the traditions that Gaels once got in the ceilidh house and to encourage not only technical facility but a deeper understanding. Cape Breton tradition bearers, including fiddlers, have played an important role at the school from its beginnings.

Cape Bretoners have also been active in maintaining and disseminating the Scottish fiddling tradition in other forms as well. There are, at a conservative estimate, more than 100 CDs featuring traditional Cape Breton instrumental music currently on the market, not to mention instructional videos, such as Natalie MacMaster's *A Fiddle Lesson* and her interactive CD ROM *Natalie Interactive*, as well as the associated piano accompaniment lessons such as Tracey Dares' video *A' Chording to the Tunes*. SeaBright Murphy Video Productions has also been active producing videos about Cape Breton that strongly showcase the island's Gaelic musical traditions, and has released two popular videos on Buddy MacMaster.

Print sources are also well represented. Fiddlers had long collected and made good use of the printed Scottish collections, compiling some wonderful libraries. The collection of the late Joe MacLean of Washabuck, for example, extends to more than 120 volumes, some dating back to the 18th century and including signed copies from some of the great collectors such as Nathaniel Gow. These types of books were becoming exceedingly difficult to find by the second half of the 20th century. Paul Cranford's republication of

Keith Norman MacDonald's *Skye Collection* in 1979 made an important Scottish collection readily available again and demonstrated that there was a demand for such material among musicians. Since then, many other of the old collections have been republished both in Nova Scotia and in Scotland, and thousands have been sold. Similarly, the compositions of Cape Breton fiddlers such as Dan R. MacDonald, Dan Hughie MacEachern, Gordon MacQuarrie, Donald Angus Beaton, Kinnon Beaton, Dougie MacDonald, Jerry Holland, and Brenda Stubbert have been published and are proving popular.

In spite of the successful rejuvenation of the Gaelic fiddling tradition, there remains cause for concern. The revival has been strong but uneven. Rural areas — particularly rural Inverness County — continue to be the stronghold of the tradition, and the success of the revival in urban Nova Scotia has been limited. While there are some excellent tradition bearers in urban areas, they usually have a strong association with rural districts where the tradition is strong. Often they are only one generation removed from those communities and have been strongly influenced by relatives from those rural districts.

Otherwise, knowledge of the tradition and support for it in these urban areas is surprisingly low compared to rural communities. This is true even of smaller urban areas, such as Inverness, Port Hood, Port Hawkesbury, and Baddeck, which demonstrate the same notable inability to produce fiddlers and dancers as they formerly did Gaelic speakers. Nine times out of ten, tradition bearers in these centres are from the surrounding rural districts such as Deepdale or West Mabou.

That is not to say that there is no interest in these Gaelic arts in urban centers, but that the Gaelic support network does not appear robust enough to sustain and develop it. It is worth noting that none of the Inverness County urban centres hosts regular square dances, despite the fact that Inverness County is particularly noted for this tradition and that between Inverness and Port Hawkesbury there are at least a half a dozen rural communities hosting fairly regular dances throughout the summer. Fiddlers have frequently noted this discrepancy between rural Cape Breton on the one hand and industrial Cape Breton and these smaller urban areas on the other, where they have found the environment is far less informed and supportive. Fiddlers from the rural districts surrounding Inverness, for example, who attended Inverness Consolidated High School in the 1980s, were branded as "hicks" because of their interest in the tradition, despite its rejuvenated popularity elsewhere.

The old Gaelic and rural versus English and urban divide still appears strongly in evidence in Nova Scotia. This is somewhat worrisome since urban centres are the areas where most of the schools, school boards, media, cultural or "arts" organizations, larger audiences, and more lucrative performance venues are located; where most of the decisions are made on what gets taught in schools and universities; where most of the decisions are made on what gets represented in the media and how it gets represented; and where most of the decisions are made on what gets funding from arts and culture sources. A lack of knowledge of the Gaelic tradition in these urban areas can now have important and far-reaching ramifications for the rural areas where the tradition is more strongly rooted.

More serious than the uneven distribution of the rejuvenated tradition is the concern expressed over the performance style itself. Unlike their forbears, the fiddlers who have taken up the bow since the 1970s have not had the same strong Gaelic community culture to draw from. Those young fiddlers in the 1970s, for the most part, did not grow up with anything like the exposure to Gaelic — particularly to *puirt a beul* and Gaelic song — that was available to the older generation — people like Donald and Theresa MacLellan, Alex Francis MacKay, Dan Hughie MacEachern, Dan R. MacDonald, Donald Angus Beaton, Dan J. Campbell, Angus Allan Gillis, Angus Chisholm, Joe MacLean, Theresa Morrison, and a large number of others, many of whom were fluent speakers of the language. Traditional pipers were next to nonexistent by the 1970s and '80's, Gaelic singers were few, and even the number of fiddlers was not large. The ceilidh house was replaced by the classroom and formal lessons (though the influence of local fiddlers and family remained important), and its traditional entertainment arts were being overwhelmed by radio, television, stereos, and pop music. With formal lessons, note reading also began to take on an increased importance over the development of a good ear, although instructors encouraged skill in both.

Even this younger generation of fiddlers from the revival movement of the 1970s and '80s, many of whom have since come into their own as respected tradition bearers, has noticed a worrying change in the environment for the next generation of fiddlers learning the art today. Formal classes and the concert stage are becoming even more important, while the long apprenticeship of the ceilidh house, where a love of music was engendered and where fiddlers had a chance to understand the tradition and its presentation before becoming active performers, continues to decline steadily. Ironically, some feel that some of the strain is a result of the revival movement's great success. Formal lessons had become a more central part of the fiddling tradition during the era that fiddlers like Natalie MacMaster and Ashley MacIsaac learned their art, but direct and intimate contact with tradition bearers was still paramount in forming the deeper understanding of technique, performance styles, repertoire, interaction with accompanists, dancers, and listeners, and a host of other important aspects of the tradition. However, for many of the present learners, the modern media are becoming a more important point of engagement with the fiddling tradition than this community apprenticeship.

Some observers (including instructors) voice a concern that a number of these young players (and some parents) have become dazzled by professional stage acts, slick media presentation, and the success of the most professional fiddlers currently playing and are in a tremendous rush to emulate those qualities without paying due attention to the intermediate steps that got those artists to the point they are today. In short, they worry that a desire to produce "stars" is becoming an important motivation in the tradition rather than a desire to play the highest-quality music possible. Others note that, partly for this reason, the pressure to perform publicly, often with polished stage "acts," before a good foundation has been laid is intensifying. There is concern that, with this weakened foundation and increasingly external orientation, young fiddlers will begin changing the tradition in response to prevailing (and often fleeting) fashions in order to meet the real and perceived biases of the media, of potential recording agents, and of increasingly poorly informed audiences. While there is no sense of panic yet, there is real concern that an effort be made to ensure that the driving force behind the fiddling aesthetic remains a local one and that quality of play remains the paramount measure of "success."

The greatest concern, however, is also the most difficult to address and that is the effect of the loss of Gaelic on the fiddling tradition's distinctive Gaelic style.

> The concern of this generation of musicians is not that of losing the musical heritage due to a lack of musicians, but a lack of Gaelic speakers, which in turn may effect the Gaelic flavour of the music in years to come ... (Jackie Dunn, *The Clansman*, 1992: 9)

References to this Gaelic flavour and to the link between language and music in the violin tradition go back at least 200 years but the tenor of the references has changed today to one of worry.

> Cape Bretoners love their piping and fiddling music, but there'll be none of it as we know it unless there's more Gaelic being learned. The language and the music are one. All this fine Gaelic music we enjoy came out of Gaelic heads. If the language goes, the music will never, never be the same. (Michael MacLean in John Shaw, "Language, Music and Local Esthetics: Views from Gaeldom and Beyond": 5)

The connection between speaking Gaelic and achieving a certain flavour in the music may be an old one but it is not well understood today. While studies on the influence of language on rhythmic sensibilities suggest that the language link is more important than has long been widely realized, the important point here is a simple one: at the base of the instrumental folk tradition is song. At the base of the Gaelic instrumental tradition is Gaelic song. Without Gaelic, there is no Gaelic song, and without Gaelic song, there is no longer the Gaelic base beneath the fiddling tradition, no matter how vigorous it may otherwise be. With the loss of Gaelic, the fiddling tradition now rests on a different musical foundation.

What is at issue is not so much what language people speak as what language they *listen* to, especially what types of songs, and, as a result, what sorts of musical scales, modes, rhythms, and ornamentation they find appealing. Teaching people to speak Gaelic is unlikely to have much, if any, impact on how they play the fiddle on its own, but it can reopen the world of Gaelic song and its associated rhythms, which is becoming increasingly closed to the younger generation of fiddlers. The closing of that door may have a far more profound effect down the road than is currently realized.

Gaelic is a language ideally suited to singing due to its long and short vowel stresses. This gives the language an inherent flexibility for dealing with musical notes of different length that is not naturally evident in English. Take for example a well-known piece like

"Mary's Wedding" or "Mhòrag bheag nighean Mhurchaidh an t-saor" (Little Morag, daughter of Murdock, the carpenter) as it's known in Gaelic. If we look at the stress pattern in the same opening phrase in the English and Gaelic version we see that they are strikingly different (- = stressed; v = unstressed):

Step we gaily on we go
- v - v - v -

Mhòrag bheag nighean Mhurchaidh an t-saoir
- v - v v v v v v -

(Interview: Allan MacDonald, 1994)

The English rhythm is comparatively bland — an even number of alternating stressed and unstressed syllables. The Gaelic rhythm, by contrast, is far more intricate with three stressed syllables and six unstressed syllables. It is likely this internal rhythm that gives Cape Breton fiddling its tremendous "lift." The tempo of Cape Breton fiddling is comparatively unhurried — playing fast is a big taboo in the Gaelic tradition — yet, the alteration between powerful long syllables/notes and a rapid-fire succession of unstressed syllables/notes produces a driving rhythm that gives the impression of speed and produces an exciting effect. Unfortunately, the ability to discern these internal rhythms seems to be fading (possibly due to the increased gravitation towards the comparatively pedantic rhythms of English song and pop music), and the natural tendency is to try to make up for the lack of rhythm by increasing the tempo of playing. This initiates a vicious circle, as increasing the tempo only makes it that much more difficult to squeeze in the necessary extra unstressed notes, thereby further expunging the "lift" that is so characteristic of the Gaelic sound and so essential to dancing.

Ultimately, the concern today is not about the younger generation's exposure to other traditions, since innovation and assimilation have long been a part of the Gaelic musical tradition, but, instead, a concern that they are not being exposed to enough of their own tradition to give a proper balance. As a result, their ability to make these sorts of musical judgments is likely to be impaired. It has been argued that as long as they are copying the repertoire of the older generation who did grow up in the Gaelic context with the Gaelic aesthetic the problem is not acute, but that they lack the resources to creatively adapt or create new tunes within the Gaelic idiom with the same degree of success:

> O, gheobh mise atharrachadh ann. Na puirt ... tha fios agam fhin air na faclan 's tha barail agam air na faclan a bhiodh orra — nuair chluinneas mi iad 'gan cluich aithnighidh mi nach eil a' Ghàidhlig aca ... cha'n eil am blas aca. Tha beagan do dealachadh ann. An nist Micheil Mac 'Illeain, cuiridh esan blas air ceòl nach cuir an fheadhainn eile, agus chuireadh Iain Uilleam Caimbeul agus cuiridh Alasdair MacAoidh 's an fheadhainn sin. Uill, tha feadhainn ann fhathast dhe'n fheadhainn òga, tha iad a'leantail a'bhlas a fhuair iad greim air bho'n t-seann-fheadhainn, ach tha iad a'call cuid agus nuair a thig iad astaigh gu ceòl ùr, cha'n eil iad ag amas air a'bhlas seo idir. Agus bha mi cantail ri Micheal Mac 'Illeain, mar a tha mise

> 'ga fhaicinn ann an ceann còig bliadhna deug nuair a dh'fhalbhas na seann-fhidhlearan 's a bhios an fheadhainn eile air a dhol astaigh air a'bhlas ùr a bhios ac' air, gum bi e a cheart cho mór nach bi e cho duilich dhut a'seann-bhlas fhaighinn tuilleadh 's a bhiodh e dhut leth-bhreac fhaighinn dhe na puirt a chluich am Pìobaire Breac ... An rud a thig as a'sin ri ùine, gu bheil a'seann-bhlas Gàidhealach a bh'air na puirt, gu bheil e dol a bhith air a chall. Ch bhi fios aig an neach co-dhiubh tha e faisg air a neo nach eil — co-dhiubh tha e ann neo as — nuair nach eil am facal aige
>
> Oh, I find a difference there. The tunes … I know the words and have an idea of the words that would go with them — when I hear some people playing them I'll recognize that they do not speak Gaelic ... they don't have the swing. There is a little difference. Now Michael MacLean, he can give music a flavour that others can't, and so could John Willie Campbell and Alec Francis MacKay and such players. And, well, some of the younger generation, they're following the style that they acquired from the older people, but they miss part of it, and when it comes to new tunes, they don't achieve the flavour at all. And I was saying to Michael MacLean, as I see it, at the end of another fifteen years when the older generation of fiddlers will be gone and the younger ones will have entered into their own style, it will be just about as difficult for you to hear any more of the old style as it would to get copies of the tunes played by the Pied Piper...So the net result over time will be that the old Gaelic flavour in the tunes will be lost. No one will know then whether he's close to it or not — whether he's into it or out of it — when he doesn't have the word(s to go with it). (Joe Neil MacNeil in John Shaw, "Language, Music and Local Esthetics: Views from Gaeldom and Beyond": 6)

Jackie Dunn-MacIsaac echoed this concern in her music thesis at St. Francis Xavier University, *Tha Blas na Gaidhlig air a h-Uile Fidhleir (The Sound of Gaelic is in the Fiddler's Music)*, pointing out that a lot of the fiddlers of her generation began "cleaning up" the music — stripping it down in the mistaken belief that they were adding a technical smoothness that the older generation of untrained players had been incapable of. She and many others have since realized that much of the "grit" or "dirt" (as it is often called), which was being removed, was an important part of the ornamentation — in effect, what gave the music its unique flavour.

This type of change reflects a declining local aesthetic in the face of new technological possibilities and demands and has been widely noted in Ireland, Cape Breton, and in other parts of Europe and North America. In his Master's thesis on Prince Edward Island fiddling, Jim Hornby identified homogenization as one of the greatest threats to traditional fiddling.

> Today, however, homogenization has replaced ignorance as the main threat to the integrity of traditional dance music, with technological dissemination of superstyles and vast printed and recorded repertoires. As Reg Hall observed,

> A side effect of this [dissemination] is the very sad breakdown of regional styles. Perhaps more people are playing more music but they are all beginning to sound alike. (Hornby 1982, 185)

Change is inevitable, but standardization is not. Traditional music is a functional part of the society of which it is a part, and when that society evolves, strategies must be *actively* sought to ensure that critical features of the music are not simply lost by default. The actions of the Cape Breton Fiddler's Association in the 1970s sought to address just such a problem. Today, the challenge is no longer so much the supply of fiddlers, as Jackie Dunn-MacIsaac noted, but the need to ensure that the tradition continues to evolve without losing its Gaelic style or, in other words, its integrity. There is every reason to think, given the weakened state of Gaelic culture generally, that this important feature of the fiddling tradition may need the same sort of active and positive support that was once given to the problem of a declining number of fiddlers.

If Gaelic is as important to Cape Breton fiddling as so many believe it to be, it will be important to find ways to ensure that young fiddlers are given access to it. Since the traditional learning environment of the ceilidh house is being increasingly replaced by a more formalized educational environment, it would seem only logical that one of the focuses be on improving the representation of the Gaelic arts in the schools. In addition to teaching fiddling (Jackie Dunn-MacIsaac is currently the only teacher in Cape Breton schools teaching "Cape Breton" fiddling), better provision for Gaelic language and song in the schools, good local access to older recordings of a diverse number of local Gaelic singers, pipers, and fiddlers, and better educational opportunities for learning about what makes the Gaelic musical tradition distinctive would all help ensure that younger fiddlers are able to make well-informed decisions about the direction they would like to take the tradition in the future.

Dancing

Dancing has remained very popular in Gaelic communities in Nova Scotia and is today a mix of old traditional forms and newer innovations. Like so many aspects of Gaelic tradition, however, it also exists side by side with highly stylized representations of "traditional" Scottish dancing, most of which have been recently imported from the Scottish Lowlands and very little of which have become popular in Gaelic Nova Scotia.
In its more traditional forms, dance continues to serve not only as an important form of cultural expression in its own right but also as an important stabilizer for the musical tradition. It also provides excellent and popular participatory opportunities for people who are relatively new to Nova Scotian Gaelic culture and wish to become more involved.

It is testament to the degree of external manipulation that Gaelic culture has suffered that the form of dancing most popularly associated with Gaelic Scotland — Highland dancing — should have the weakest roots in Gaelic culture, at least in its present form, while the form of dance that is most strongly rooted in that same culture — step dancing — should be routinely dismissed as "Irish." Step dancing and Highland dancing are actually quite closely related; in fact, they appear to have once substantially overlapped one another but have taken very different trajectories in the Old World and the New over the last two centuries. Research into the area of traditional Scottish Gaelic dance is quite weak — and the subject of dance is an inherently difficult one to tackle, in any event. However, it is possible to tease out some strands from the historical record that hopefully provide a clearer picture of the tradition and its evolution.

Highland dancing was (and is) a collective term for several different dances that fell broadly into a category of set-piece display dances, performed by individuals or small numbers of dancers following a prescribed pattern and, as far as can be told, using prescribed steps. It was predominantly a male form of cultural expression, but in its present form, it is danced almost exclusively by females. Like piping, however, this form of dancing was largely removed from its Gaelic social context during the course of the late 18th and 19th centuries and generally by the same forces that were active in charting a new non-Gaelic course for piping — namely, the "improvers." The main forum for display became the Highland Games circuit and its precursor piping competitions, which, as has been discussed previously, introduced an urban, English, and usually elitist demand for romanticism, gentility, pageant, and costume, and all but eliminated the Gaelic content — and certainly the Gaelic context. The main source of income (not to mention prestige) around the tradition was soon derived from winning the prizes at those competitions and/or training other champion dancers. As with piping, judging became the purview of the socially powerful but, from a Gaelic standpoint at least, culturally inept, and the tradition began to move very strongly away from its Gaelic roots by the 19th century.

Long before the 1900s, authority over this supposed "Highland" art had been unequivocally relocated to the Lowlands. Lowland-based dance masters, in keeping with the philosophy of "improvement" then operating, were frequently expert in ballet and other forms of continental dance (but rarely in other forms of Gaelic cultural expression) and incorporated these "improvements" with increasing regularity into Highland dancing. As with piping, Highland dancing in Scotland became increasingly "Highland" in its superficial style — in other words, in the newly created costumes that became a required part of competition — and decreasingly "Highland" in its actual performance, as judges and instructors with little knowledge of the culture became more and more influential in charting its development and as the institutional structure around the newly emerging style of dancing became better organized. The fact that pipe music was also changing and becoming more ornate and less rhythmic was also not helpful, as the two were invariably married together on the Highland Games circuit.

By the 20th century, Highland dancing had lost its function as a form of Gaelic cultural expression and became, instead, a form of urban-based "art" dancing. The move away from the Gaelic folk-culture only grew more dramatic as the 20th century unfolded and particularly from the 1950s onward, when significant new innovations were introduced. By this stage, the highly stylized dance, with its ballet influence, its invented costumes, and its dislocation from Gaelic folk music and from Gaelic culture generally had been exported around the world, while keeping its authority structures firmly based in the Scottish Lowlands.

The Highland games infrastructure in Nova Scotia and institutions like the Gaelic College served as the main mechanism for introducing the stylized form of Highland dancing into Nova Scotia and for cementing the bonds of authority to the Scottish Lowlands. The cultural aesthetic that was introduced and the values that surrounded Highland dancing were quite foreign to Gaels in Nova Scotia, in spite of their long history of dance and their cultural conservatism. The following two images of Gold Medal performers at the 1943 Gaelic College Mòd give some sense of the new orientation.

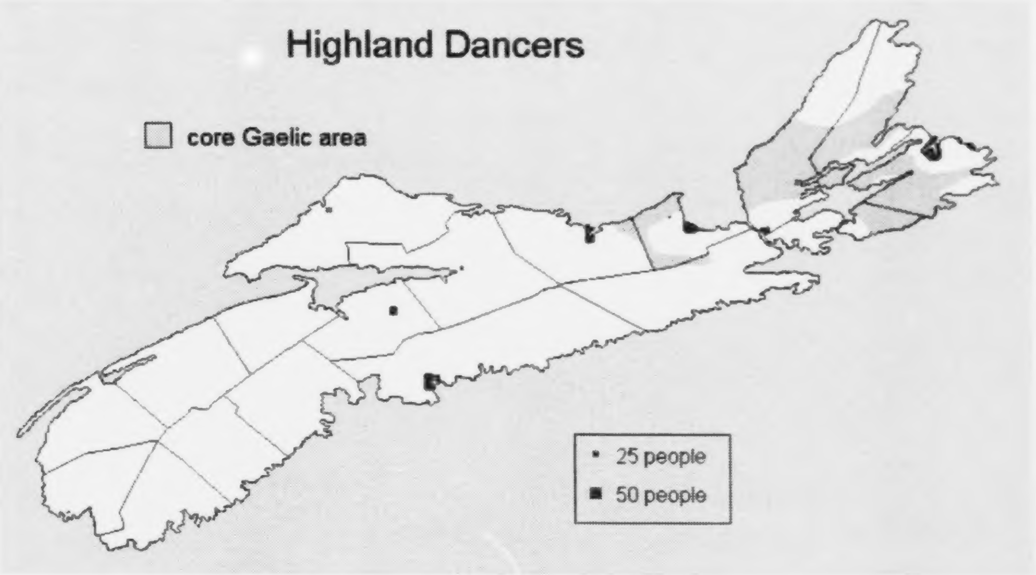
More seriously, by passing off the modern imported forms of dancing as "traditional" Gaelic dancing, institutions like the Gaelic College helped actively undermine confidence in what was actually the traditional form of dancing in Nova Scotia at the time. Frank Rhodes in his appendix to Flett and Flett's authoritative work, *Traditional Dancing in Scotland*, discussed the disturbing effects the Gaelic College's program was having in Cape Breton by the 1960s.

> This discrepancy in style was not widely appreciated in Cape Breton Island until in 1939 the Gaelic College at St. Ann's started teaching modern Highland Games dancing together with some of the Country Dances published by the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society and some of the dances collected by Mrs. Mary Isdale MacNab of Vancouver. Since then many people in Cape Breton have doubted the Scottish origin of the stepping [step dancing] and either have considered it to be an importation from Virginia or have attributed it to the French settlers from Louisbourg or later non-Scottish immigrants. While all these factors may have had an influence on the present day style, *it is certain that the roots of the step-dancing lie in the solo dances and Reel steps which were brought from Scotland early in the nineteenth century.* (Rhodes 1966, 273)

Expatriate Scots, however, took little notice of this native traditional style of dance in Nova Scotia. Instead, they worked vigorously to promote their own imported dances. Not surprisingly, since that style was foreign to the province's strong Gaelic districts, they also found Nova Scotians to be very much wanting in their ability to master these dances. According to C. I. N. MacLeod, W. A. MacPherson of St.Thomas, Ontario, editor of the *Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, who had been an adjudicator of the modern Scottish style of Highland Dancing for 30 years remarked in the 1950s that, "a few Highland Dancers in the province showed promise but that, on the whole, the standard is lower than in Western Canada." (C. I. N. MacLeod Correspondence; Undated report – c. 1950) The comparison of Nova Scotian dancers with their compatriots in the Scottish Lowlands from this period would have been even less flattering.

At the time that W. A. MacPherson was helping Nova Scotians "improve" the standard of their Gaelic cultural interpretation, Maj. C. I. N. MacLeod, newly arrived from Scotland, was also busily involved in the Nova Scotian Highland games circuit, where he was immediately appointed a judge. He actively promoted Highland dancing, noting his success in establishing a summer school in Pugwash featuring the art and his successful discussions with the School Inspector George Lent and Principal A. MacDonald to have Highland dancing taught in Judique. (MacLeod to Col. D.C. Sinclair, 29 May 1950; undated annual report) Like MacPherson, MacLeod showed a similar concern over the fact that where Highland dancing was being taught in Nova Scotia (in the form he and MacPherson recognized it), it was out of date with the latest thinking on the proper "traditional" way to execute the form and was of a generally low standard. He felt that Scottish authority over the style of dancing needed to be reinforced, requesting that "a film of Highland Dancing (as performed in Nova Scotia) be taken by the department of Education and forwarded to the Scottish Board of Highland Dancing, Edinburgh for adjudication and comment." (C. I. N. MacLeod Correspondence; Undated report, c. 1950)

As Gibson had noted for the piping tradition, the only areas that could maintain Gaelic cultural continuity in the face of the institutional campaign to introduce the new forms of dancing were areas with a strong, self-confident Gaelic aesthetic. This is borne out by the distribution map of modern Highland dancing in Nova Scotia, which shows almost exactly the same essentially negative correlation with the areas of Gaelic cultural strength in the province as has been noted for piping. Traditionally, non-Gaelic urban areas are the zones of strength for Highland dancing in the province, and the correlation with Gaelic culture areas is essentially zero. While there are some Highland dancers within the traditional, rural core Gaelic zone of Nova Scotia, their numbers are not sufficient to show up on the map, and the main areas for passing on the tradition are firmly and all but exclusively established in urban districts outside the core Gaelic zone.



Evidence from Cape Breton's Gaelic tradition demonstrates that Highland dancing did come out from Scotland in its more traditional form and suggests that modern step dancing is its closest surviving relative. To simplify the argument somewhat, traditional Highland dancing used prescribed steps to execute a prescribed pattern; step dancing used the same steps in a spontaneous manner with either no pattern of movement (a solo dancer would execute the steps while remaining stationary) or as an integral part of the Gaelic social dances — the four- and eight-handed reels. In Cape Breton, traditional Highland dancing and step dancing continued to exist side by side and interact for at least the first hundred years of settlement, but the more formalized style of dancing eventually went into steep decline, although it has not yet disappeared.

In many of the early accounts of settlement and in the Gaelic tradition of Nova Scotia, scores of "dance masters" are routinely noted — especially in Inverness County. They appear to have occupied a place in Scottish Gaelic society somewhat analogous to their better-documented compatriots in Ireland, where they undoubtedly specialized in traditional dance but also in acting as dance intermediaries, introducing external fashions that could be adapted to the local musical and dance aesthetic. (Helen Brennan, *The Story of Irish Dance*, Mount Eagle Publications Ltd., Kerry, 1999) The full extent of their repertoire in Nova Scotia is now no longer immediately apparent but dances such as *The Flowers of Edinburgh*, *Seann Triubhas* (Old Trousers), and *Smàladh na Coinnle* (Snuffing the Candle) are some of the ones that have been noted. It appears that dances such as these and step dancing were the specialties of the dance masters.

While Highland dancing today seems very far removed from the tidy, "close-to-the floor" footwork of Cape Breton step dancing, there is considerable evidence demonstrating that the higher stepping style and the use of soft-soled ballet style slippers currently *de rigueur* in Highland dancing are not at all traditional; in fact, the change from the type of shoe that would be suitable for step dancing to the ballet slipper is very recent. The style of footwork executed by a Scottish dance master in the mid 1770s, for instance, suggests that the performance aesthetic used for traditional Highland dancing was much closer to that of the present style of Cape Breton step dancing rather than to the modern style of Highland dancing.

> Their neatness and quickness in the performance of them is incredible. The motion of the feet is the only thing that is considered in these dances as they rather neglect the other parts of the body. (Edward Topham; Kate Dunlay, "The Playing of Traditional Scottish Dance Music," *Celtic Languages and Celtic Peoples: Proceedings of the Second North American Congress of Celtic Studies* 1988: 177)

In Nova Scotia, dance masters often ran dancing schools of varying degrees of formality, and the indication is that the more structured Highland dance and step dancing were taught interchangeably. Although step dancing and social dancing were passed on through the Gaelic folk tradition as well, the weight of evidence suggests that instruction in Highland dance was generally by these specialist dance masters. Unlike the "improved" version of Highland dancing that would evolve in Scotland, however, there is every indication that the form of Highland dancing that came to Nova Scotia remained closely integrated with the Gaelic folk tradition and especially with its traditional forms of music. Noted Gaelic informant Mary "Jack" Gillis gave an account of dance masters she had known in the early 20th century, tracing an unbroken link to the earliest emigrations from Scotland.

> Well, in my time I think almost everyone danced, especially the older generation. There were "dancing masters" who came from Scotland and who taught step dancing any time of the year; that was their pastime. "Big" John Alex Gillis' father, Allan Gillis was a dancing master. Allan and *his* father, Alexander (Mac Iain ic Alasdair), were from Scotland. Allan taught dancing in his own home — gratis! There'd always be somebody to play the violin. Oh, I'd love to see "Big" John Alex dance again! He was a big man but very light on the floor. He loved to dance if he heard good music, and he liked [fiddler] Angus Allan Gillis playing.
>
> "Big" John was also called John "the Dancer." I once saw he and his daughters, Margaret and Effie Helen, dance *The Flowers of Edinburgh*. Several of the older people danced *The Flowers*, though you had to be pretty professional to do it. It had certain steps in a pattern. This Margaret Gillis was just a perfect dancer! I saw her at Fr. John Hugh MacEachern's concerts. (Mary "Jack" Gillis in MacGillivray, 1988: 66)

Margaret Gillis is still able to dance *The Flowers of Edinburgh* and is only one generation removed from Scotland as her grandfather, Allan, and his father, Alex, both of whom were noted as "dance masters," immigrated to South West Margaree from Morar in 1826, when Allan was still a boy. Her personal history with the dance form strongly suggests continuity rather than radical change, particularly since her home district of South West Margaree had been noted as one of the most conservative and important strongholds of Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia by observers such as Charles Dunn, in his book *Highland Settler* (1953). She described the process of cultural transmission and the tight integration between music and dance, starting with her great-grandfather Alex, who emigrated from Morar.

> He had a large family — I think it was twelve — and in those days you taught them every thing you knew. Dancing was one thing he knew well and he taught his family and any others who were interested. In turn, his children taught *their* children. Allan Gillis, our grandfather, was a very good dancer, an excellent dancer by Father's standards! Father often referred to him by saying, "Whenever there was music, Allan would be the first one on the floor!" That's all Allan needed for motivation. He played the violin too, so you see *that* strain was right through them. (Margaret Gillis in MacGillivray, 1988: 60)

Margaret Gillis's interpretation of Highland dancing shares many of the same performance values associated with step dancing in Cape Breton today; a close attention to the music - almost exclusively now, the fiddle, although there were formerly a large number of good dance pipers in the area — and neat footwork executed very close to the floor. Mary "Jack" Gillis's account also emphasized that essential element — an element largely absent from modern Highland dancing.

> I saw "Big" John's sister dancing in a competition in Judique in 1927, and she danced *The Flowers of Edinburgh* too. Her name was Mrs. MacEachern and she was married in Glendale. And Jessie MacDonald danced at this Judique picnic too, and she was the daughter of the dancing master Sam MacLean who was from Glendale also. So, both ladies were the daughters of dancing masters. And even the judges were good dancers: Malcolm H. Gillis of South West Margaree — my father-in-law — and Dr. Alex Kennedy of Kenloch. Mrs. MacEachern was given the prize because these judges said that Mrs. MacDonald lifted her feet a little too high. (Mary "Jack" Gillis in MacGillivray, 1988: 66)

Other dances such as *Seann Triubhas* (Old Trousers) and *Smàladh na Coinnle* (Snuffing the Candle) are also routinely mentioned in a similar Gaelic context in Cape Breton, suggesting that at least some of the "improved" Highland dance repertoire was once danced in its more traditional form throughout Gaelic Nova Scotia. Frank Rhodes placed the roots of the traditional style of Cape Breton Highland dancing firmly in Scotland.

> The majority of steps used in the various solo dances which survived among the Scottish communities on Cape Breton Island are very uniform in style, and employ a form of stepping in which the dancer marks the rhythm of the music with toe and heel beats and brushing movements, the feet being close to the ground throughout. Although this form of stepping is unlike that seen at modern Scottish Highland Games, *there is no doubt that the Cape Breton solo dances originated in Scotland,* and indeed some of these dances can be shown on internal evidence alone to be related to solo dances which can still be found in the Scottish Highlands and the Outer Isles. (F. Rhodes, 1966: 272, emphasis added)

While this Gaelic style of Highland dancing has more or less disappeared now, the associated tradition of step dancing remains in excellent health.

Step dancing existed as both a solo dance and also as an integral part of the social dances that were done in Gaelic Nova Scotia. It was done to reels and strathspeys and to fiddle, bagpipe, *puirt a beul,* or whatever instrument could be used to make music. The emphasis in step dancing was on an intimate connection with the music and on keeping the footwork tidy and close to the floor. Those who could "dance on a dime" were particularly admired. In its solo context, step dancing was performed in an upright but relaxed posture with the arms hanging freely at the sides. Steps were executed with a minimum of upper body movement and generally from the knees down. Good dancers were judged on a whole host of criteria, but the ability to match the music well and to execute the steps in a small area were probably the most important.

Step dancing also made strong rhythmic demands on the musicians (usually a fiddler), and the interaction between musician and dancer undoubtedly played an important role in giving "Cape Breton" fiddling its characteristic drive. Step dancer Rev. Eugene Morris confirmed the importance of maintaining a moderate tempo but getting in the required "lift" to make the music lively.

> You know, Donald Angus Beaton used to say that the dancers kept him going … And, with a good fiddler, dancing is a joy; it's so *easy* to dance! When I think of someone like Donald Angus, his music was lively without being fast. There was a bounce in each note almost. (Rev. Eugene Morris in MacGillivray, 1988: 143)

The importance of this lively style in making dancing "easy" and the separation in the music and dance styles of Scotland and Gaelic Nova Scotia were further emphasized by Washabuck stepdancer Hector MacKinnon who spent some time in Scotland while on military service during the First World War.

> The dancing in Scotland was really different — and the music was different. I didn't like the music at *all*! That makes it harder to dance. (Hector MacKinnon; MacGillivray, 1988: 115)

Just how seriously the integration of step dancing and traditional Gaelic music was taken can be judged from another anecdote recounted by Reverend Morris.

> When we began the first Glendale concert, Frankie MacInnis and I drove around the country to see as many of the fiddlers as we could find. We went to see this older gentleman who lived outside of Inverness – Ranald Smith. He was ninety-seven years old. He used to play the fiddle and we asked him if he would come to Glendale and he answered, "Well, I hardly play at all now." He had a dark-coloured fiddle on the wall and we asked him if he would play and he took it down. He was bent over and playing a little bit but you could hardly distinguish the tune. Then, I got up to dance and I just remember that he straightened right up in his seat and played a strathspey and reel as well as he could play them. I think that he felt that he would be letting me down if he didn't play well. He almost looked as if he had gotten an injection or something like that, you know. He was a different man when he came to play for somebody who was dancing. I don't think I'll ever forget that. To me it really confirmed the association of the dancer and fiddler. (Rev. Eugene Morris in MacGillivray, 1988: 143)

Although dance masters appear to have taught step dancing at their dancing schools, it was also very clearly passed on informally in the Gaelic folk tradition and, as the example above indicates, it was strongly integrated into that tradition. Rhodes, referring to Colonel Thornton's observations on dancing in the Highlands, once again rooted the tradition in Scotland.

> This same form of stepping was also very largely used in the setting periods of the Cape Breton Island four-handed and eight-handed Reels. In the Reels, however, the steps were much less regular in construction than in the solo dances, and each individual step consisted of a more or less standard nature, these sequences being joined together as the dancer pleased in order to match as far as possible the notes of the music. The style of stepping used in Cape Breton Island Reels is thus in close accord with the style seen by Colonel Thornton in the Scottish Highlands in

> 1804, where the dancers "all shuffle in such a manner as to make the noise of their feet keep exact time." (Rhodes 1966, 272)

Accounts from Scotland indicate that dancers in the Highlands beat out the rhythm of the dance with their feet, often with hard-soled shoes on the best available wooden platform, just as they do today in Cape Breton. Similar accounts have been recorded from the early days of settlement in Nova Scotia of travelers stopping horse and buggy to take advantage of the acoustic possibilities presented by a wooden bridge or of lumbermen step dancing on stumps after falling a tree. Evidence from Cape Breton suggests that dancers rarely passed up an opportunity to dance when good music was available regardless of the floor or footwear available but were particularly fond of hard leather soles on wood.

As a solo dance in its own right and as a part of both traditional Highland dancing and social dancing, step dancing was arguably the most important form of Gaelic dance and was tightly interwoven with other aspects of Gaelic folk culture. Its historical continuity is not only supported by the numerous references to the art form in the Highlands around the immigration era, referred to briefly above, but also by an extensive oral tradition in Nova Scotia, which routinely traces lineages of stepdancers right back to Scotland with considerable detail about their dance traditions.

In spite of the rootedness of this form of cultural expression in the Gaelic world, the disappearance of the tradition from Scotland and the emergence of both a more stylized form of Highland dancing as well as the genteel import from England, "Scottish country dancing," both of which have been exported around the world by institutions much concerned with "tradition" and with authority, have made many Scots hostile to the idea that step dancing originated in Scotland. They have often been quick to dismiss the validity of the Nova Scotian tradition. Jean (MacKenzie) MacNeil of Washabuck, Cape Breton, recounted one such experience with a Scottish musical instructor.

> We went down to Maine to the harp camp this year, and there was a lady there who came from Scotland to teach the harp. We had little céilidhs in the evenings and, of course, Lucy and I stepdanced. Well, that lady was saying, "Now you needn't tell me that *that's* Scottish! That's Irish dancing. (Jean MacKenzie MacNeil in MacGillivray, 1988: 126)

Seumas MacNeil, who directed the College of Piping in Glasgow for nearly 50 years and who was an influential piping instructor brought to Canada by the Gaelic College at St. Ann's, was similarly dismissive of the traditional form of dancing he witnessed when in Cape Breton, devoting an entire editorial to the subject in the influential *Piping Times* in 1995.

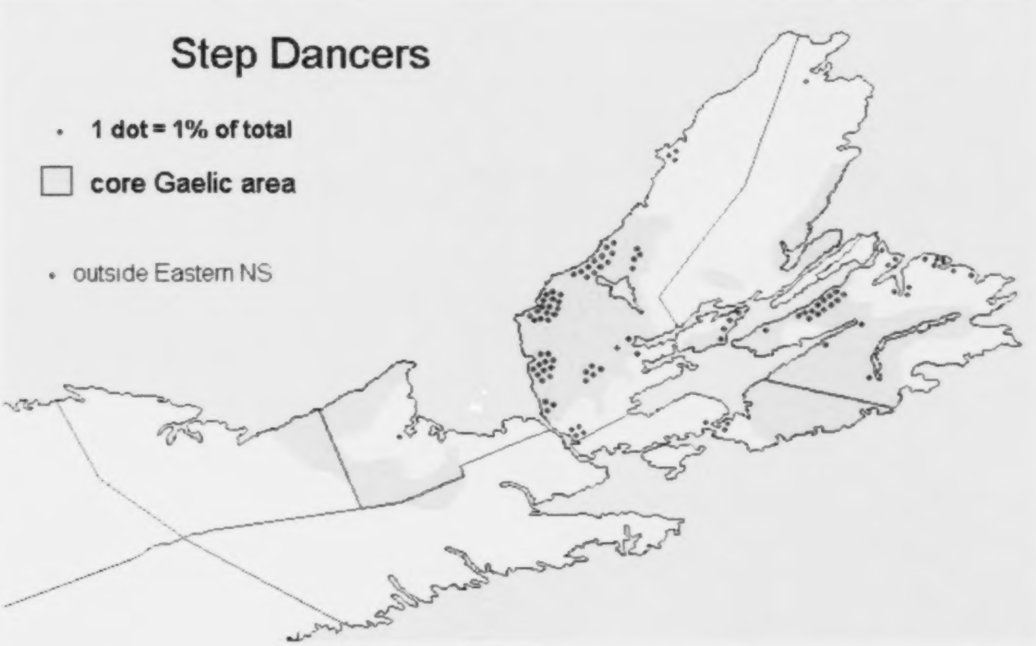
> Now Cape Breton step dancing is obviously a variation of Irish traditional dancing, with the same erect posture of the body and in many cases some of the same steps – a fascinating art to watch and probably even more enjoyable for the performer than for the audience.
>
> The great James L MacKenzie [a Highland dancer from Scotland] spent an evening learning some of the steps, which of course he picked up very quickly. When it was suggested to him that this was a form of dancing which had come from Scotland but had died out in the home country, he laughed at the idea. To him it was obvious that this was a form of Irish dancing but in a country [Canada and specifically — Cape Breton] where Ireland and Scotland are fused together in people's minds it was probably wishful thinking to attribute the dance to the wrong source.
>
> The strange thing is that now in Scotland some people are trying to claim that step dancing did originally come from here, although there is not the slightest shred of evidence to support this. James L knew the history of Highland dancing better than most. He was able to demonstrate for example the early form of the Highland fling where the legs were spread evenly apart and the two feet thumped flatly on the floor simultaneously.
>
> Perhaps there will always be people who seek to put forward preposterous suggestions as to the origins of our art, for reasons at which we can only guess. In piping we have had to suffer this from the BBC for several years now. Time has been allotted on radio to people with startling interpretations of the old history of piping and pipers, or old books and manuscripts. As G B Shaw almost said, those who can do; those who can't try to push their ridiculous ideas on to the rest of us." (Seumas MacNeill, *The Piping Times*, January 1995: 16–17)

The supposition that the Irish settlers taught Highland immigrants to stepdance is an interesting one, even without considering the extensive evidence demonstrating cultural continuity in the Scottish Gaelic communities of Nova Scotia, of which MacNeill was apparently unaware. Firstly, the Irish failed almost entirely to teach Highland immigrants to dance their quintessentially Irish dance, the jig. However, they did succeed in teaching them to stepdance to the reel, a form of dancing that had been popular in Scotland for hundreds of years but that had only recently been imported to Ireland (from Scotland) and had not yet become widespread there until nearly a generation after the first Highland immigrants had stepped ashore in Nova Scotia (Brennan 1999, 21). More remarkably still, the Irish taught the Scottish settlers scores of strathspey steps, in spite of the fact that the strathspey had evolved in the Scottish Highlands and was unknown in Ireland. Then, having taught the Highlanders how to stepdance, the Irish largely abandoned it themselves in their Nova Scotian settlements, leaving the Scottish districts to become the notable strongholds of the tradition.

It is curious, considering how frequently Scots note the similarity between Irish step dancing and the Scottish Gaelic stepdance style of Cape Breton that no one has apparently ever questioned whether the influence, if there was any, may have been the other way around. Since the only form of step dancing that actually overlaps in the two traditions is the reel — a relative latecomer to Ireland from Scotland — would it not be equally reasonable to ask whether it was Highlanders who may have introduced reel step dancing to Ireland or at least strongly influenced the manner in which it evolved? The Highlands, after all, were home to an integrated Gaelic social structure for 150 years after the old Gaelic society had collapsed in Ireland. Scotland, not Ireland, was enjoying a golden age of fiddling at the time of emigration, and dancing to the fiddle had a much longer history in Scotland than it did in Ireland. In Donegal, in the north of Ireland, Scottish influence has been widely acknowledged in the fiddling style, including the all-important bowing. A four-hand reel broadly similar to the Cape Breton "Scotch Four" is common throughout the north of Ireland and is referred to as the "Scottish" or "Scotch" reel (Brennan 1999, 97). *Sean-nós* (old style) stepdancers in the culturally conservative Conemera Gaeltacht in the west of Ireland stepdance only to a very limited number of tunes; most call for the Scottish tune, Mrs. MacLeod's Reel. (Brennan 1999, 137) While none of this is particularly conclusive evidence that the Irish learned to stepdance from the Scots or even that there is a notable Scottish influence on the overall Irish stepdance tradition, it is certainly better than the evidence that has been advanced, to date, claiming that the Cape Breton style of dance is Irish and should caution against the current fashion of immediately assuming that any similarity in the forms of cultural expression in Ireland and Gaelic Scotland must ultimately be due to Irish influence.

The fact that people such as the late Seumas MacNeill have been willing to make such facile judgments in spite of often being prominently involved with very powerful and widely influential institutions supposedly devoted to culture and education is due to two qualities that have been frequently noted among the "improvers" who have appointed themselves as mediators of Gaelic culture. The first has been the assumption that the traditional art forms were simple and easily learned; MacNeill and his compatriot, James L. MacKenzie, who "of course" picked up the steps "very quickly" spent only a few hours examining the Cape Breton step dancing tradition before laughing it off as "obviously" Irish and returning to Glasgow. The second has been the assumption that the carriers of Gaelic tradition were simply not very bright — and certainly not as intelligent as the "improvers" — in this case, the instructors from the College of Piping. MacNeill's assertion that Cape Bretoners wrongly believed that step dancing was a Scottish tradition because they just did not know the difference between Irish and Scottish culture summarily dismissed an extensive body of tradition that detailed the history and evolution of Scottish culture in Nova Scotia (which MacNeill was almost perfectly ignorant of) and that, in fact, made very clear distinctions between the two cultures, acknowledging Irish influence where it occurred. Although MacNeill dismissed the cultural acumen of Cape Bretoners, it was he, himself, who was unable to distinguish between Irish and Scottish culture.

As Frank Rhodes noted in *Traditional Dancing in Scotland*, such confident dismissals of step dancing in Nova Scotia by Scots and the efforts of local institutions such as the Gaelic College to import modern Scottish dancing has shaken people's confidence in the Scottish origins of step dancing in Nova Scotia. It has not, however, succeeded in breaking its bond with Gaelic communities in the province. Although step dancing has crossed the cultural barrier into the communities of other ethnic groups and into urban areas, the correlation with rural Gaelic communities is still close to 80 per cent and Scottish districts continue to be recognized as the centres of excellence. Again, it is evident that past religious affiliation and the strength of Gaelic are critical factors, as the art form is much more strongly represented in Cape Breton than on the mainland and much more strongly represented in Catholic areas than in Protestant. The mainland Scottish settlements of Inverness County are once again the principal strongholds of dancing, as one might expect of an art form so tightly linked to fiddling, but there is also a notable concentration of dancers in the South Uist settlement district of Boisdale, and excellent dancers have been noted throughout the old Nova Scotian *Gàidhealtachd*. One of the best, Angus "Mossy" MacKinnon, for instance, hailed from Black Point, an area once noted for excellent Gaelic piping, and fiddling.



The dismissiveness on the part of Scottish authorities and the generally low level of institutional support have also failed to reduce the overall popularity of step dancing. In his book *A Cape Breton Ceilidh*, published in the late 1980s, Allister MacGillivray enumerated just short of 600 stepdancers, giving some sense of the relative health of this particular dance tradition in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Step dancing remains popular and quite widely accessible. Almost every square dance in the province not only features step dancing as an integral part of the square set but also usually sets aside a moment where the floor is cleared, the fiddler plays a string of strathspeys and reels, and any step dancers in the hall, who feel so inclined, demonstrate their skills for other dancers. Additionally, a large number of the more than 2,000 Gaelic events that occur annually in the province, such as concerts and festivals, feature step dancing, and there are currently more than 25 individuals and institutions in the province offering step dancing lessons besides the informal instruction that still goes on in the home and at square dances.

Gaels were frequently noted for their love of music and dance and, like their music, their social dancing was highly energetic. Some sense of the liveliness of the art and of the cultural continuity between the Old World and the New is evident in the following accounts provided by travelers passing through Gaelic communities in the Highlands and in Nova Scotia during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

> C'est quelque chose d'original de voir l'espèce de fureur qui saisit toute l'assemblèe … Jeunes et vieux, grand'mères et petites-filles, ministres et medicines, chacun se lève et sauté (It's something novel to see the kind of fury that seizes all of them … Young and old, grandmothers and grand-daughters, ministers and doctors, each gets up and jumps) (Chevalier de la Tocnaye c. 1794; Gibson 1998, 113)

> Their dancing is at the very Antipodes of our fashionable quadrilling; with them every muscle and limb is actively and rapidly engaged, and they often maintain the floor till one, whose strength of body and lungs is weaker than that of the others yields to the fatigue, and sits down. They have always dances at their marriages, and also when the Bride arrives at her Lord's house. Christmas is also with them a season of making merry. (John MacGregor, *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America*, 1828)

A wide variety of social dances were done in the Highlands and in Gaelic Nova Scotia, but they generally broke down into two large categories — the eight-hand and four-hand reels. The liveliness of the two dances might be guessed by the fact that the eight-hand reel was sometimes referred to simply as the "wild eight." As the names would imply the dances were carried out by four and two couples respectively and danced to a medley of Scottish reels. However, the four-hand reel in Cape Breton (known generally as the "Scotch Four") begins in strathspey tempo before switching to the faster reel tempo, about midway through the dance.

The figure of eight travelling pattern used in the Scotch Four is relatively simple but the dancers use complex footwork (step dancing) to beat time to the music both as they set to their partners and as they travel — in fact, throughout the entire dance. This, too, seems to have been an old practice, as there are accounts from Scotland of hard-soled shoes being used in this fashion and producing a "clattering" sound. (Dunlay 1988, 176) Colonel Thorton's observation of a dancing master's "ball" in Glen Orchy, some two hundred years ago, also describes such a practice and claims that it was widespread when emigration was under way to the New World.

> The company consisted of about fourteen couple, who all danced the True Glen Orgue Kick. I have observed that every district of the highlands has some peculier [sic] cut; and they all shuffle in such a manner as to make the noise of their feet

> keep exact time. Though this is not the fashionable style of dancing, yet, with such dancers, it had not a bad effect. (Thornton in Flett and Flett, 1966: 30)

Social dancing appears to have been a very popular activity amongst Gaels, and there are numerous accounts of dancing at weddings and wakes, at seasonal celebrations, at the end of communal work activities, at momentous occasions, and essentially whenever time allowed and music was available. Samuel Johnson left a striking account of dancing on his famous tour through the Hebrides with Boswell in 1773. He described a new social dance called "America" that emigrants from the Isle of Skye were performing with gusto at the point of departure to celebrate their impending migration to the New World. Accounts from other districts also speak of Gaels dancing on the ships that took them to Nova Scotia. This attachment to dancing and the often-spontaneous nature of the dance were highlighted in a 19th-century account from Prince Edward Island. The inhabitants of Brae, having just completed the construction of a new road, set out in a procession to mark the occasion. Pipers walked on ahead of the small fleet of horse-drawn wagons containing the revelers, who from time to time leapt from the wagons to dance Scottish reels to music supplied by the fiddlers in the party.

Gaelic social dances seem, for the most part to have been of such a celebratory rather than ceremonial nature. However, the four-hand reel appears to have served both functions. As the "Wedding Reel," the four-hand reel played an important part in the rituals associated with marriage in Gaelic society. The Wedding Reel served to welcome the newly-wed couple back into the community in their new social roles. Immediately following the marriage ceremony in church, the wedding party returned to the home where the reception was being hosted. The bride and groom, and usually the best man and bridesmaid, kicked off the festivities by dancing the Wedding Reel. It has also been noted that the parents of the married couple occasionally made up a second group for the reel. The dancers were expected to put on a good performance of step dancing — so much so, that it has been noted that on certain occasions poor dancers were replaced for the ceremony by more skillful ones. The Wedding Reel was danced to specific tunes known both in Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island as "the wedding reels." They are in no way different from any other reels played but, in the case of the two that are known to have been played in Cape Breton, were probably chosen because of the appropriate sentiment expressed in their titles, *Tha Dùthrachd Mo Chridhe Dhuit* (You Have My Heart's Love) and *Och a Chiallain* (O, My Dear).

Scottish country dancing is another one of the modern Scottish cultural imports that have been introduced to Nova Scotia by the same Lowland cultural export infrastructure that has been responsible for modern Highland dancing and modern piping. Despite the name, Scottish country dances evolved in England. They were imported into the Lowlands of Scotland during the 18th century and remained a part of the genteel culture of the elite until well into the 19th century, when the common people of the Lowlands began to adapt them into their own musical and dance aesthetic. They appeared in the Highlands as part of the general "improvement" tide but not until the second half of the 19th century when emigration to Nova Scotia had ended. This "tradition" was, once again, first introduced to Gaels in Nova Scotia by the Gaelic College.

> It is significant that Country Dances were completely unknown among the Scottish communities in Cape Breton Island until their introduction by the St. Ann College in 1939, for this indicates that such dances were not danced by the ordinary people in the Highlands and Outer Isles about the period when the main Scottish immigration to Cape Breton Island took place. This is in agreement with living memory in Scotland that Country Dances were first introduced among the ordinary people of these regions about 1850 (Rhodes 1966, 275)

The Gaelic College has been the most faithful promoter of Scottish Country Dancing in Nova Scotia, complete with its "Highland dress" and traditional accordion music, but it has not been alone. C. I. N. MacLeod also tried to encourage Nova Scotians to adopt Scottish country dancing when he was working as Gaelic advisor to the Department of Education. In his annual report of 1951, he indicated how he was promoting the resurgence of Gaelic culture in the province. "Two evening classes sponsored by the Caledonia Society of Cape Breton have now commenced with a good attendance at each session, viz. Scottish Country Dancing taught by Mrs. C.I.N. MacLeod, and the Sydney Academy Gaelic Class taught by myself on Monday nights. A Caledonian Society Chorus has also been formed under the society auspices and this group will contribute to the Burn's Concert on the 25th — the birthday of our National Poet."

Despite the institutional support Scottish Country Dancing enjoyed (and continues to enjoy at the Gaelic College), it never proved particularly popular and has, to date, failed to develop the kind of infrastructure in the non-Gaelic areas of the province that Highland dancing has. It failed almost entirely to make any impression on the dance norms of Gaelic Nova Scotia. The biggest change in traditional dancing in Nova Scotia came not from subsidized instructors from Scotland but from returning émigrés from Boston.

Square dances began appearing in Scotland around 1815 as officers returning from the Napoleonic Wars introduced the latest continental fashions into the Scottish Lowlands. This was the "fashionable quadrilling" that John MacGregor noted in 1828 was so far removed in character from the vigorous dancing he witnessed in Gaelic Nova Scotia. By the 1830s and 40s these dances were well evident in the fashionable society of the colonial capitals, such as Halifax and Charlottetown, but never spread far beyond that geographical and social domain. Quadrilles and lancers would not be introduced to the rural *Gàidhealtachd* from this elite urban sphere at all but would be brought to Nova Scotia in the early 1900s by returning émigrés showing off the latest fashions from Boston. It was one of many new imports from the United States, including waltzes and foxtrots. In fact, in Prince Edward Island, the new square dances were sometimes simply referred to as the "Boston Quadrilles" (Interview: Hughie MacPhee, October 1998).

The appearance of the square sets coincided with the demise of the main social dance in Gaelic Nova Scotia, the eight-hand reel but does not appear to have been the cause of its disappearance. Details on the decline of this apparently very popular dance are sketchy, but it does seem to have received severe clerical disapprobation in both Protestant and Catholic districts. The incoming square dances did, however, begin to displace the remaining traditional dance, the four-hand reel, but it did not go quickly or easily. As late as 1929, the Toronto *Star Weekly* featured an article on dancing in Glencoe Mills, an area with a particularly strong musical and dance tradition in Inverness County, indicating that there was still some tension associated with the new dance, with the older people heckling the younger square dancers by shouting "fours" indicating their clear preference for the older more vigorous style dance. This must rate as one of those rare examples of the older generation trying to get the younger generation to liven up a bit.

In the first decades of the 20th century the square dance largely displaced the traditional Scottish reels as the main form of social dancing in Gaelic Nova Scotia. The eight-hand reel disappeared completely while the four-hand version hung on as a social, ceremonial, and, eventually, display dance, which was performed less and less frequently. It continued to be used as the ritualistic first dance at some weddings for a time but had become a rarity by the post-war period. It is still performed at weddings and concerts but now usually as a display dance. Although it is a highly admired form of dance to watch, it has lost its social function.

A wide variety of square dances were imported from Boston and enjoyed varying degrees of favour throughout the Gaelic areas of the province. Essentially, they were danced with four couples, like the old eight-hand reels, and consisted of a series of discrete figures (usually four) danced to different types of music with a short break in between each figure. Some of the figures involved interaction between the various sets that were on the floor. "Callers" or "prompters" were employed to guide people through the different and unfamiliar patterns.

In Gaelic areas these new dances were often highly "Gaelicized," particularly in Inverness County, where the square dance has been very effectively absorbed into the native Gaelic dance tradition. Various types of music were initially used for square dance sets, from marches and song airs to hornpipes and polkas, but in Cape Breton, jigs and reels were most popular. The musical demands of the new form of dance resulted in a large importation of jigs from the Irish tradition but also a considerable number of local compositions to augment the comparatively small repertoire of traditional Scottish jigs. Reels were played no differently than they had been in the older forms of dancing, and so there was little change in actual musical style.

The main square dance types in western Cape Breton now feature two figures of jigs, followed by one reel figure while the square dances of eastern Cape Breton generally feature one jig figure, followed by two figures of reels. The more significant difference is in the degree to which the square dance was absorbed into the local Gaelic dance norms. In eastern Cape Breton, Gaelic-style music is used, but the patterns of the dance and the footwork are essentially unchanged from when the dance was imported. In western Cape Breton, by contrast, the third figure of reels has been heavily Gaelicized with extensive step dancing throughout the figure, which may partially explain the greater popularity of step dancing in that part of Cape Breton. Probably because of the opportunity it affords for step dancing, some variant of this Inverness County set is usually used when dancers from the various traditions meet on the same floor.

The square dance has become the main form of social dancing in Gaelic Nova Scotia, and it has been largely absorbed into the Gaelic tradition, particularly in Inverness County where the continued use of step dancing preserves not only that art form but helps ensure that the tight link between dance and music is maintained. However, like other forms of Gaelic cultural expression, square dancing has suffered its own ups and downs in the last century. By the 1960s, it was suffering severe decline, coincidental with decreasing interest in traditional fiddling. It is interesting to note that observers in Giant's Lake, a conservative Gaelic cultural area in Guysborough County, south of Antigonish, and in Mabou, one of the cultural strongholds in Inverness County, both attributed the marked decline in square dancing in the 1960s to the appearance of "Pig 'n Whistles." (*Oran*, 10 January 2001: 16–17; *Celtic Heritage*, July–August 2000: 26) Pig 'n Whistles were pub-like gatherings modeled on a somewhat smarmy television program that purported to portray an English pub, complete with boozy drinking songs. Local Pig 'n Whistles used a similar format with virtually no Gaelic cultural content.

It was not until the fiddling revival in the 1970s, that square dances saw a return to vigour. Today, there are hundreds of excellent dancers and numerous opportunities to participate in dancing. Weekly square dances are held throughout the year in West Mabou, throughout the winter at St. Lawrence's Parish Hall in Halifax (hosted by the Cape Breton Club), and throughout the summer in Glencoe Mills, Brook Village, South West Margaree, and Margaree. In addition to the weekly dances, there are less frequent dances held at Baddeck, Belle Cote, Big Bras d'Or, Big Pond, Boisdale, Creignish, Christmas Island, Glencoe Mills (in addition to regular weekly dances), Glendale, Grand Narrows, Inverness, Judique, Mabou, Marion Bridge, Middle River, New Waterford, Scotsville, St. Ann's, Strathlorne, Sydney, Washabuck, and Westmount, not to mention frequent impromptu sessions at pubs and other events.

As with fiddling, in spite of the apparent health of the dance tradition, there is some cause for concern. With the exception of the Cape Breton Club dances in Halifax, which run throughout the winter but not in the summer, and the dances in West Mabou, which run year-round, most of the rest of the dances in Nova Scotia are squeezed into about two months of the summer. Come September, the numbers attending square dances steadily bleed away. The West Mabou dances, which are held to raise money for athletics in the area, have been able to operate through the course of the winter only by subsidizing their losses with the larger earnings made in the summer.

While the return of economic migrants and the arrival of tourists in the summer does partially account for the greater numbers attending dances in the summer, the almost complete collapse in the winter is not similarly explained solely by tourism demographics. Certainly, bad weather and bad roads are problematic but there is some evidence to suggest that square dances are now suffering a second "Pig 'n Whistle" decline, only that this time, the chief culprits pulling people away from the dances are hockey and bingo. Many people are simply taking the existence of the dances for granted and assuming that there will always be this opportunity for local cultural expression and interaction. There are a good many good dancers who are rarely seen at square dances during the winter, in spite of a professed interest in dance, and this is most worryingly and increasingly true of the young. There is a strong core of excellent dancers in the 40–60 age group who anchor the dances in West Mabou and a smaller group of older and much younger (school-age) dancers, but there are very few high school students attending the dances and only a scattering of people in the 20–40 age group. This does not bode well for the future. As one regular dancer remarked with regard to the lack of high school students, "We used to have a good group of high school students coming out on a regular basis but they've all gone off to university and to work outside Cape Breton and haven't been replaced. This is the age you have to hook them. If they get interested now, they can always come back to it later but if they don't develop an interest now, they'll be lost for good." (Conversation: West Mabou Dance, 2001)

This winter, it was debated whether to close down the West Mabou dances during the off-season, since crowds were dropping below 40. (*Oran*, 2001: 16–17) This would have meant that there were no regular dances running in Cape Breton during the winter, and many, including the West Mabou dance organizers, were worried that could prove very damaging to the fragile cultural continuity of dancing in Cape Breton. Their concerns were given extensive coverage by the local media, which carried the story, and fiddlers decided to put on a six-fiddler dance one night to rekindle interest (splitting the regular fee six ways). Other fiddlers also agreed to play for the remainder of the off-season for half the earnings at the door, regardless of the size of the crowd. Some nights that might be as low as $20 for each musician, but the musicians believe it is important to make such efforts to support the culture. As a result of the commitment of those interested in promoting the culture, the dances have been continued for this year. If they are to continue, however, it seems evident that there will need to be better year-round support from the community.

At the moment, dances offer an excellent chance for people to involve themselves in the culture. Roughly 150 square dances are held each year in Nova Scotia, some as part of other forms of entertainment but most as stand-alone events in small communities. For a cost of $5–6, on average, audiences are treated to three hours of solid Gaelic instrumental music performed by some of the best traditional musicians in the world. They may watch and participate in a unique form of local social dancing with roots in the Scottish Highlands and may watch some of the best Gaelic-style stepdancers anywhere displaying their art. Many of the dances are "family dances" (no bar), and children are welcomed and actively encouraged to participate.

Gaelic and the Modern Media

Print

In addition to its traditional modes of expression, Gaelic has also accessed several modern domains with varying degrees of success. The first foray into the modern media was made by an Antigonish native, Alexander MacGillivray, son of "John the Piper," who had been one of the elite pipers in Scotland. In 1836, he published, *Companach an*

Oganaich, no An Comhairliche Taitneach (The Youth's Companion or The Friendly Counsellor), the first Gaelic book published in Nova Scotia. Hymns composed by Rev. James MacGregor of Pictou, *Iul a' Chriostaidh,* were published in Charlottetown in 1841. In 1851, John Boyd of Antigonish published the first Gaelic magazine in the province (a weekly) entitled *An Cuairtear Og Gaelach.* The venture was short lived, and the following year, Boyd began publishing a weekly newspaper, the Antigonish *Casket,* which is still in operation. It was half in Gaelic, half in English, but tellingly, the Gaelic section was full of songs and history, while the English section dealt with the news. The Gaelic content was steadily reduced in the *Casket* over the years, but even today, it features an occasional article in Gaelic submitted by Prof. Ken Nilsen of St. Francis Xavier University.

The Rev. Alexander MacLean Sinclair of Glenbard, Antigonish County, was particularly active in the field of Gaelic publishing in Nova Scotia from 1880 to 1904, while acting as a minister in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. He was the grandson of the Bard MacLean and published the bulk of the bard's secular work and some of his hymns as well as the songs and hymns, of several other Gaelic poets in *Clarsach na Coille* (The Harp of the Forest). He published an anthology of Gaelic song, *The Glenbard Collection,* and four volumes of Gaelic poems by various composers from 1411 to 1875 under the collective title, *The Gaelic Bards.* He published two volumes of Gaelic poems composed by MacLeans and two miscellaneous volumes of Gaelic poems, entitled *Filidh na Coille* (The Forest Poet) and, *MacTalla nan Tur* (Echo of the Towers). He also produced a volume of the poetry of Iain Lom (John Lom MacDonald) and of Alexander MacKinnon. In addition to his work on Gaelic song, he was keenly interested in genealogy, producing the extensive volume *The Clan Gillean, or History of the MacLeans.* He also wrote numerous booklets and smaller articles, including submissions to the Nova Scotian Gaelic newspaper, *MacTalla.* (Dunn: 81)

Undoubtedly, the most significant Gaelic presence in the media was Jonathan G. MacKinnon, whose *MacTalla* was the longest-running Gaelic weekly in the world (1892–1904). MacKinnon was a native of Stewartdale near Whycocomagh who published out of Sydney. *MacTalla* was entirely in Gaelic and included not only news and advertisements in Gaelic but also an extraordinary assortment of Gaelic cultural material. MacKinnon's subscription list stretched half-way around the globe, but the operating costs in a town in the early stages of a coal-mining and steel-making boom were prohibitive. In 1901–02, he reduced the paper's output to every second week and in 1904 was forced to cease publishing. He followed *MacTalla* by translating and publishing four classic literary works, *Am Piobaire Breac agus Da Sgeul Eile* (The Pied Piper and Two Other Tales), *Far am Bi Gradh, Bidh Dia* (Count Leo Tolstoy), *An Triuir Choigreach* (Thomas Hardy), and *Sgeul an Draoidh Eile* (Henry Van Dyke). He also provided a Gaelic chapter for a book on the history of Cape Breton and Gaelic articles for various newspapers. He published a monthly Gaelic magazine, *Fear Ceilidh,* from 1928 to 1930. MacKinnon's contribution to Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia was unsurpassed, and it is truly a shame that not more work has been done to highlight his achievements.

In 1922 the Scottish Catholic Society began publishing *Mosgladh* (Awakening), a bilingual magazine. It ran for more than a decade, but its Gaelic content was heavily outweighed by English articles. In 1925, James MacNeil of Sydney attempted to fill the vacuum left by *MacTalla* with the publication of the Gaelic newspaper *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal* (The Gaelic Herald). The newspaper ran for more than a decade but only irregularly. Gaelic began to slip out of the mainstream of the Nova Scotian media and even further into the periphery. The language was rarely featured in newspapers, and when it was, it was almost always as an item of historical or folkloristic interest or in the form of a song.

Songs and tales were the main focus of Gaelic publishing as the 20th century wore on. Books of songs and tales were published steadily but infrequently. *Failte a Cheap Breatuin (Welcome to Cape Breton)*, a collection of Cape Breton Gaelic songs published by Vincent A. MacLellan in 1891, had very little company until *Smeorach nan Cnoc 's nan Gleann* (The Thrush of the Hill and Valley) was compiled by Bernard Gillis and Rev. Dr. P. J. Nicholson and published in 1939. Another long wait ensued until *Gaelic Songs in Nova Scotia* was compiled by Helen Creighton and C. I. N. MacLeod and published in 1964. MacLeod also published several collections of songs, stories, and historical items on his own in the late 1960s and early 1970s — *Sgialachdan a Albainn Nuaidh* (Tales of Nova Scotia), *Bardachd a Albainn Nuaidh* (Poems of Nova Scotia), and *Sgial is Eachdraidh* (Tale and History). In the same decade (1977), Professor Donald A. Fergusson of Sydney in conjunction with others published a collection of Gaelic songs from Nova Scotia, entitled *Fad air Falbh as Innse Gall: leis co-chruinneachadh Cheap Breatuinn* (Beyond the Farthest Hebrides: including the Cape Breton Collection). In 1981, Sr. Margaret MacDonell and John Shaw published *Luirgean Eachainn Niall: A Collection of Gaelic Folktales Told by Hector Campbell*. In 1982 Sister MacDonell published a collection of New World immigrant songs, *The Emigrant Experience: Songs of Highland Emigrants in North America*. In 1987 John Shaw published with Joe Neil MacNeil the bilingual book *Sgeul gu Latha (Tales Until Dawn): The World of a Cape Breton Gaelic Story-Teller*. In 2001, Shaw published another bilingual book with Lauchie "Dan N." MacLellan, entitled *Brigh an Òrain (A Story in Every Song): The Songs and Tales of Lauchie MacLellan*.

In recent years, the Gaelic community has enjoyed occasional articles in various news media but has been principally served by two magazines. *Celtic Heritage* was founded by Marcie MacQuarrie of Arisaig and is published out of Halifax. Originally known as *The Clansman*, the paper is something of a clearing house for various Scottish, Irish, Celtic, and Nova Scotian cultural items. Among other things, it features historical articles, musical reviews, stories, and interviews with traditional musicians.

Am Bràighe was founded by Frances MacEachen of Hawthorne, Inverness County, a former editor of *The Clansman*. MacEachen felt that there was a need for a magazine that would focus on Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture and serve as a voice for the Gaelic community. She also felt it was important to base such an enterprise in the Gaelic districts of Nova Scotia. The paper is currently run out of Queensville, Inverness County. The paper focuses on various aspects of Nova Scotia's Gaelic tradition but also deals with related Gaelic developments in other parts of Canada and in other countries such as

Scotland and Ireland. Over the last decade, the paper has placed a strong emphasis on recorded oral tradition and has substantial Gaelic content and a regular Gaelic learner's section. It also features regular profiles of Gaelic tradition bearers and news of Gaelic development programs happening in Nova Scotia.

Radio

With the language slipping further and further from mainstream use in the print media in the early 20th century, it is hardly surprising that it would find the struggle to gain access to newer emerging media even more difficult. Radio proved a tough nut to crack as far as the language was concerned. James MacNeil, Gaelic editor of the *Sydney Post Record*, was a staunch warrior on behalf of the language, continuously writing to various officials asking for representation of the culture. In 1937 he managed to convince CBC to include a regular Gaelic program, "Celtic Ceilidh," in its schedule.

Since that time, various shows have come and gone, usually with a strong musical emphasis, but there has been very little success getting Gaelic language content on radio. A good example of the difficulty occurred in the early 1990s when one program that did feature Gaelic content, CBC's *Island Echoes*, announced that the weekly hour-long program was going to be reformatted and the Gaelic language content substantially reduced. Quoted by Frances MacEachen in *The Clansman*, local producer Craig Crinkley explained that the rationale for reducing the Gaelic language content was actually an *increased* interest in Gaelic culture:

> That launched into a whole discussion (among people at the CBC) about *Island Echoes*. There are all kinds of people who feel kinship toward Gaelic culture but who do not listen to *Island Echoes*. They felt excluded because it was done mostly in Gaelic and they didn't have Gaelic ... we thought they could be served by a program *about* Gaelic. (*The Clansman*, December/January, 1993)

Although Crinkley claimed (and probably sincerely believed) to be thinking of the greater good of Gaelic, like many before him, he really demonstrated nothing more than a firm commitment to meeting the entertainment needs of an English-speaking audience, particularly through the use of Gaelic music served up in English — most notably that of professional recording artists who had already demonstrated their acceptance by mainstream English-speaking audiences and the mainstream English language. Music would serve as the focus for the new program:

> And not just traditional singing, which is unaccompanied, but the music of the Rankins and a ton of fiddle music. In fact I can go out on a limb and tell you there will never be an *Island Echoes* program with no fiddle music. (*The Clansman*: 1993)

Having determined that "a ton of fiddle music" was more important to the well-being of Gaelic culture than the use of the Gaelic language, Crinkley's team ventured out into the Gaelic community to reveal other aspects of their envisaged improved "Gaelic" service.

A week before the first of the new-format programs was to be aired (but after the first block of programs had already been produced), a public meeting was held, ostensibly to give Gaelic speakers a chance to voice their opinions about the changed format:

> Effie Rankin, a member of Mabou Gaelic and Historical Society, questioned Crinkley at the meeting as to why he brought them together when the decision to cut Gaelic had already been made.
>
> "I also told them I couldn't possibly be in favour of these changes when they are eliminating Gaelic ... but they went to great lengths to say that they weren't eliminating Gaelic and this was an improvement, more people would enjoy the program ... Music was another thing they said they could expose to a wider audience. Music is really the least of our worries. Every station that you turn on someone's got the fiddle and all that stuff. He seemed to think that they caught on to something unique ..."
>
> Donald MacEachern, a Gaelic speaker from Sydney, Nova Scotia said he was very sad to hear of the changes. "They still have the music I suppose but there's too much English conversation ... It was the last bit of Gaelic we could hear ... The first thing I thought when I heard that program was there's the end of Gaelic ... I've been talking to a few people, Dan MacPherson, — Dan's a friend of mine, we always talk Gaelic with each other when we talk on the telephone — and he's of the same opinion." (*The Clansman:* 1993)

Typically, concerns expressed within the Gaelic-speaking community were not heeded. The late Joe Neil MacNeil (Eos Nill Bhig), widely regarded as the greatest living exponent of Gaelic storytelling in the world at the time voiced his unequivocal dissatisfaction with the "improved" Gaelic broadcasting. After being given a paltry four minutes to tell a Gaelic story on a special Halloween broadcast from *Taigh na Gaidheal* (The House of the Gaels) in Sydney, Cape Breton, MacNeil was asked to translate his story into English, for the benefit of English listeners:

> I told a story on the radio the Friday night before Halloween but then I had to translate that to English. So I'm through, I'm through with that. I'm not going to bother going on a program to speak Gaelic and then have to translate it to English. But the English, let them have their English programs so they can speak English among themselves. Let them go ahead and tell their English stories. (*The Clansman*: 1993)

Today, *Island Echoes* is broadcast one hour a week on Saturday evenings. The show focuses on Cape Breton and is usually Gaelic rooted but has little Gaelic content. In spite of this, it remains one of the most important Gaelic programs available in Nova Scotia. Jenna MacNeil, freelance reporter for the CBC makes the following estimates for Gaelic cultural content: *Island Echoes*, about ten per cent to 30 per cent Gaelic language content per show; CBC *Information Morning*, a three-hour show running Monday to Friday, 25 per cent Gaelic cultural content (higher in the summer, lower rest of the year), approximately five per cent Gaelic language content over the year; CBC *Mainstreet*, two-hour show running Monday to Friday, 35 per cent Gaelic cultural content, approximately five per cent Gaelic language content over the year; and CBC *Atlantic Airwaves*, a two-hour program on Saturday mornings, based out of Halifax, approximately 70 per cent Gaelic cultural content, approximately ten per cent Gaelic language content. MacNeil estimates that these programs make up about two per cent of CBC's programming.

Since 1998, CBC has been partnering with the BBC to produce local Gaelic-oriented programs. Every year the BBC sends a team to gather material in Cape Breton. CBC Sydney assists by supplying technical and production support. ECBC (Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation) sometimes provides ground transportation. In exchange for the assistance, CBC gets the rights to rebroadcast the finished BBC programs. Most years this amounts to five programs with one co-produced and co-hosted by CBC There is always Gaelic content in these shows. The CBC Internet interface allows for archiving of the Gaelic programs. Additionally, CBC has taken a leading role (in the media) in finding and promoting burgeoning young talent in the traditional music field, often giving young up-and-coming performers their first chance to perform over the airwaves (Information, courtesy of Wendy Bergfeldt).

CJCB Radio carries a three-hour program on Sunday evenings, entitled *Celtic Serenade*. This has been running for the last 25 years and features 75 per cent Gaelic cultural content and approximately 20 per cent Gaelic language content, which represents about one per cent of the station's total broadcast time. CJFX Radio out of Antigonish broadcast Gaelic language lessons in the 1950s when it was still closely associated with St. Francis Xavier University's adult learning and extension programs. Since that time, there has been next to no Gaelic content but it has long carried a popular weekly radio program, the *Ceilidh*, featuring about 75 per cent Gaelic cultural content and about five per cent Gaelic language content. CJFX has an audience of about 8,000–10,000 for its weekday program.

At the present time, there is only one program on radio that is substantially in Gaelic, and that is the weekly, hour-long *Aiseiridh nan Gàidheal* (The awakening of the Gaels) on CKJM-FM, a French FM community radio station broadcasting out of Cheticamp. According to the station manager, Angus Lefort, the station has been featuring Gaelic ever since its opening in October 1995 and even before with temporary broadcasts (Correspondence, Angus Lefort: February 2001). The current offering is produced and hosted by two volunteers, Geoff May and Rebecca Lynn MacDonald-May from Margaree. The show features a small language course but concentrates mostly on song, often using field recordings of Cape Breton singers. "This program will be aired in Scotland through their Gaelic community radio stations as early as this spring. We are awaiting official confirmation from [the] Dept of Culture through their 'Cultural Development Through Exports' program to produce ten pilot one-hour shows that will be broadcast in Scotland." (Correspondence, Angus Lefort: February 2001)

Television

While Gaelic's presence on radio has been weak, and largely restricted to musical entertainment, it has been virtually nonexistent on television. Apart from the odd television special featuring Cape Breton musicians, there is no dedicated show for Gaelic culture and there has never been time allotted for Gaelic-medium broadcasting. A useful survey of the possibilities that exist for accessing community cable channels, for producing small programs, for dubbing cartoons, and other strategies for developing a small degree of local Gaelic broadcasting was researched and produced by Jeff MacDonald in 1994. However, "A Study into the Feasibility of Exchanging Gaelic Cultural Resources Between Cape Breton and Scotland," has not been widely publicized, and no further action has resulted.

Internet

The Internet may present some exciting possibilities for Gaelic. Already some individuals in Nova Scotia have begun making use of the Internet to offer Gaelic language instruction. Websites offer information on the culture and history (but can be very unreliable) and provide opportunities for Gaelic learners to interact with one another and share information. Some sites feature news items in Gaelic, while the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) now provides real-time broadcasts of its Gaelic service, *Radio nan Gaidheal*. There is also an exciting movement under way in Scotland to digitize Gaelic archival holdings — the *Tobar an Dualchais* (Well of Heritage) project — and put them on line, which will afford Gaelic speakers and learners wonderful opportunities to access the best of the recorded Gaelic tradition, otherwise frequently difficult to do.

Here follows a partial list of some of the better Gaelic links available at the time this publication was published. The Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia has an attractive website with excellent links to other Nova Scotia organizations, which may be consulted as a starting point. However, its events page was about a year out of date.

Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia

http://www.gaelic.net/novascotia/

St. Francis Xavier University Department of Celtic Studies

http://www.stfx.ca/academic/celtic-studies

St. Francis Xavier University Celtic Society

http://www.stfx.ca/people/celtsoc/failte.htm

The Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts

http://www.gaeliccollege.edu/

Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum

http://museum.gov.ns.ca/hv/

Gaelic Cultural Studies
(Nova Scotia public schools)

http://www.ednet.ns.ca/educ/gaelic/

Catalogue of Gaelic Books in Cape Breton County Libraries

http://www.cbrl.ca/search/leughseo.html

Sìol Cultural Enterprises
(Gaelic bookseller)

http://www.gaelicbooks.com/

Am Bràighe Celtic Journal

http://www.ambraighe.ca/

Celtic Heritage Magazine

http://www.celticheritage.ns.ca

BBC Scotland (Gaelic)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/alba/

Comunn na Gàidhlig (Scotland)

http://www.cnag.org.uk

Comunn Luchd Ionnsachaidh
(Gaelic Learner's Society)

http://www.cli.org.uk/

School of Scottish Studies
(University of Edinburgh)

http://www.pearl.arts.ed.ac.uk/

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig Gaelic College (Scotland)

http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk

Tobair an Dualchais Project (Scotland)
Gaelic Sound recording preservation project

http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/dualchas/

The Tiree Project (Scotland)
On-line database of audio recordings

http://www.tiriodh.ed.ac.uk/index.html

Gaelic Organizations

A large number of Scottish organizations have come and gone in Nova Scotia over the last two and a half centuries. Unlike Scotland, there is no professional Gaelic organizational infrastructure in Nova Scotia. All of the various Gaelic organizations are made up of interested volunteers and, because they have no specific responsibility, are frequently quite fluid in their ideologies and memberships. Attempting to assess the impact of these diverse agencies on the development of Gaelic in the province would be a major undertaking. However, some salient observations can be made.

Firstly, a good many of these Scottish organizations have never had any Gaelic cultural focus. Indeed, due to the somewhat unusual nature of cultural evolution in Scotland, some have actually been quite hostile to Gaelic and have played their part in undermining it where possible. Secondly, of those that have had a Gaelic or "Highland" genesis, Joshua Fishman's observations on ethnic support organizations in the United States would seem to apply: the great majority of such associations very rapidly lose their language and cultural focus, evolving into social clubs that maintain only a tenuous (and sometimes entirely spurious) symbolic link to the heritage culture. This process would only have been exacerbated by the co-existence of the aforementioned non-Gaelic Scottish society culture in the province with its own often highly mixed symbology and cultural assumptions.

Thirdly, of the small number of organizations that have had a solidly Gaelic focus, most have emerged in urban centres, distant from the rural strongholds of the language and culture in the province.

The result has been that Gaelic organizations have not been a particularly effective tool for sustained Gaelic cultural development in Nova Scotia, although they have, at times, made important contributions. Attempts to coordinate the efforts of the scores of such organizations to make them a more effective mechanism for cultural development have also been unsuccessful. *The Association of Scottish Societies in Nova Scotia* in the early part of the 20th century was an early and apparently short-lived attempt. In the 1940s, A. W. R. MacKenzie of the Gaelic College spearheaded the formation of the *Federation of Gaelic and Highland Societies in Canada* to pressure the CBC to include Gaelic in its broadcast schedule. It too failed to hold together. In the late 1970s *The Scottish Societies Association of Nova Scotia* emerged to coordinate the first International Gathering of the Clans festivities to be held in Nova Scotia in 1979 and subsequent gatherings that were planned. In 1991, SSANS went so far as to draw up a concept document, "Turning a Way of Life into Way a Living," a nascent cultural tourism document that sought to broaden their mandate and further consolidate their perceived position as the representative organization for Scots in the province. Unfortunately, SSANS was an essentially urban organization with roots firmly based in the imported modern traditions of Scotland attempting to speak on behalf of a largely rural constituency with a traditional culture base. Its intentions were good, but its links to Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture were just too weak to sustain it. As the International Gathering of the Clans phenomenon began to run out of steam in the 1990s, so too did SSANS.

The lack of success that these large and fairly well connected umbrella groups have had in promoting Gaelic culture strongly suggests that, however important the coordination of development efforts may be, a strong connection with the living Gaelic tradition is far more critical. Organizations such as the Scottish Catholic Society in the 1920s and 30s, Comunn Gàidhlig Cheap Breatuinn (The Cape Breton Gaelic Society) in the 1970s, and more recently Comhairle na Gàidhlig, Alba Nuadh (The Nova Scotia Gaelic Council) have had a far more Gaelic-dedicated focus and have had much greater success in achieving gains for the culture. In an effort to bring greater awareness to Gaelic language and culture in the province, the Gaelic Council designated the month of May as Gaelic Cultural Awareness Month. This commenced in 1996 and has continued each year since. A steering committee of the Gaelic Council researched and wrote "Gaelic Nova Scotia: Opportunities." In 1997, this report was submitted to the Minister of Education, Robert Harrison. The report offered realistic policy initiatives such as "Gaelic status" and provision for Gaelic language teachers in those areas where there is a Gaelic heritage presence. The Gaelic Council in co-operation with Am Braighe in 1998 and Shunpiking Magazine in 2001 and 2002 produced *MacTalla* (Echo). This publication has helped bring to light the views, stories, songs, and contributions of Gaels in Nova Scotia, both past and present.

The council lobbied and helped in soliciting from the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Rodney MacDonald, financial support for an independent third-party study on Gaelic language and culture and their economic, social, and cultural impact. The council anticipates the development of a policy based upon completion of the impact study. Since its inception, the Gaelic Council has relied on a core group of volunteers. Since its beginnings in 1984, many have helped in the process to carry on the work of Gaelic development in Nova Scotia. As the council is made up of volunteers and is a non-profit organization, it is a challenge to maintain continuity with regard to specific initiatives. The council would benefit significantly from a partnership with the Department of Tourism and Culture to coordinate events, programming, language and cultural content in provincial publications for those communities where Gaelic heritage is significant.

Comhairle na Gàidhlig, Alba Nuadh
Nova Scotia Gaelic of Council

PO Box 51011, RPO Rockingham Ridge
Halifax, NS
B3M 4R8
Contact: Lewis MacKinnon
Phone: (902) 443-4105
Website: www.gaelic.net/novascotia
E-mail: lewis.mackinnon@zepmfg.com

Comunn Gàidhlig Cheap Breatuinn
The Cape Breton Gaelic Society

President: Frank MacKenzie
3161 Sunset Drive
New Waterford, NS
B1H 1L1
Phone: (902) 862-7479

Comunn Gàidhlig an Ard-Bhaile
Gaelic Cultural Association of the High City (Halifax)

PO Box 29035
Halifax, NS
B3L 4T8
Contact: George Seto, Phone: (902) 465-5196
E-mail: af221@chebucto.ns.ca

Mabou Gaelic & Historical Society

PO Box 175
Mabou, NS
B0E 1X0
Contact: Margie Beaton
Phone: (902) 945-2790

Comunn Gaidhlig 'is Eachdraidh a' Bhraigh

Glendale
President: Dorothy Pottie
Phone: (902) 625-5500

New Waterford Gaelic Society

Dan MacIsaac
8 Carroll Street
Glace Bay, NS
B1A 3B3
Contact: Dan MacIsaac
Phone: (902) 849-9331

Comunn Gàidhlig Gleann Annapolis
Annapolis Valley Gaelic Society

Brian McConnell
PO Box 151
Clementsport, NS
BOS 1EO
Website: http://members.tripod.com/~firstlight_2/AVGS.htm
E-mail: brianmc@tartannet.ns.ca

Comunn Gàidhlig Siorramachd Phictou

P.O. Box 273
25 Fourth Street
Trenton, NS
B0K 1X0
Contact: John Gillis
E-mail: jkgillis@nsis.com

Comunn Feis an Eilein

PO Box 17
Christmas Island, NS
B0A 1C0
Website: http://www.barrastrait.com/feis.html
E-mail: feisaneilein@ns.sympatico.ca

Feis Baile nan Gall

RR 4
Baddeck, NS
B0E 1B0
Phone: (902) 929-2104
E-mail: aonghus@auracom.com

Feis a' Chladaich a Tuath

Bonny Thompson
Indian Brook, Victoria Co., NS
B0C 1H0
Contact: Bonny Thompson
Phone: (902) 929-2372

Feis Mhàbu

Bernard Cameron
Mabou, NS
Phone: (902) 945-2407

An Cliath Clis

The Halifax Milling Frolic Society
Website: http://www.angelfire.com/mi/CliathClis/

Nova Scotia Highland Village Society

4119 Route 223
Iona, NS
B2C 1A3
Contact: Rodney Chaisson, Director
Phone: (902) 725-2272

Comunn Ceilteach St. F.X.
St. Francis Xavier University (Student Society)

Antigonish, Nova Scotia
http://www.stfx.ca/people/celtsoc/failte.htm

UCCB Celtic Society

University College of Cape Breton
Sydney, Nova Scotia

SECTION THREE: CULTURE AND TOURISM

The Community Approach

It would be a mistake to think that the use of Gaelic "culture" as an economic activity is a recent phenomenon. Gaels have long used their cultural arts to contribute to the maintenance and development of their economy. This is not always immediately evident, in part because until recently those art forms were often so tightly bound up with the economic activity that they were virtually indistinguishable from it, and in part because they functioned in an unspecialized, cashless society. Gathering to sing Gaelic songs for several hours while milling cloth by hand was an integral part of economic production — in that case, producing finished cloth, ready for tailoring — but did not involve any specific remuneration for the singers. The use of a fiddler to supply music for dancing following a barn raising, a stump-pulling frolic, or some other communal work activity might represent a more calculated or specialized use of culture in the economic process but was not much more likely to imply any formalized contractual arrangement with a clearly identified monetary value affixed to the activity. Nevertheless, such cultural activities were crucial to the success of local economic activity. As the 19th century progressed, and as the use of money became more widespread in Gaelic areas, it became possible to specifically use the cultural arts to generate revenue in a commercial sense. One of the first (and most enduring) strategies for this has been the community concert.

The development of the fund-raising community concert seems to have represented a natural outgrowth from the sorts of communal celebrations that had been evident in Gaelic society time out of mind and the informal economic use of the cultural arts — previously tightly integrated into the processes and rituals of economic activity. There had likely been a noticeable commercial element involved in these sorts of fairs and seasonal celebrations for some time, but by the late 19th century, certainly, with the appearance of the first parish picnic in Mabou in 1897, Gaels hit on the idea of using their cultural arts specifically to raise money for their communities. This essential format has been very successfully used ever since in the large outdoor concerts organized by various parishes and communities throughout Gaelic Nova Scotia.

For the most part, Gaelic cultural economic activity has focused on the cultural arts and has grown naturally out of the sorts of activities the community would normally participate in to celebrate its culture. Thus, seasonal celebrations became parish picnics and community concerts where admission was charged or where money could be raised via a series of events or product sales. Similarly, dances, formerly held in homes and generally with no charge, moved into dance halls, which charged admission and sometimes sold refreshments, by the early 1900s, but both activities remained primarily unchanged culturally from their previous guise and were usually very reasonably priced. In the same way, fiddlers began producing commercial recordings from as early as the 1930s, but they were merely finding a new format (which happened to have commercial possibilities) for the art of fiddling as it was already practiced in their communities. Having the music available for a wider portion of the community and for posterity seemed at least as important a motivator as earning money for the first generations of recording artists. All of these activities remained strongly rooted in the natural process of cultural transmission in the Gaelic community but developed an increasingly formalized commercial structure and, significantly, became more accessible to strangers and, thus, more suitable for "tourism."

This is not to say that Gaels took financial recompense only as a fringe benefit to an activity they would otherwise have participated in for free. Gaels have also turned to their culture in many times of hardship, not only for solace but also for the very practical purpose of raising money. In 1925, for example, during a bitter, protracted strike in the coal mines in New Glasgow, five miners drove down to Boston where there was a large expatriate community of Maritimers and raised money for their desperate comrades back in Nova Scotia by playing the bagpipes at various places throughout the city.

Today, this cultural orientation is still very much in evidence in the community's approach to tourism. Events are usually part of the community's normal process of expressing itself culturally and entertaining itself. Essentially, the same sorts of things go on at these events as might be encountered in a more intimate house-party or ceilidh environment except that there is a (usually small) admission charged, the venues are a little larger and more people, including strangers, may take part. Even the commercial aspect of the activities is strongly oriented towards the community and culture as the money raised is frequently ploughed directly back into the community. In fact, of the 275 different Gaelic cultural activities that occur each year (representing more than 2,000 individual events) more than 70 per cent are local fund-raisers.

Gaelic community events in Nova Scotia remain quite informal, with heavy local audience participation, and they generally give a very true rendition of the cultural arts as they are enjoyed in the community at large. These are not so much "tourist" events as they are community events in which tourists can participate freely. This type of presentation of community culture affords exactly the kind of opportunity for cultural interaction that high-end cultural tourists look for; it is also very nearly diametrically opposed to the types of tourism promotion that have been sponsored by Nova Scotian institutions in the past.

The Institutional Approach

Gaelic has not been kindly treated by tourism institutions over the past 200 years. The aristocratic Highland "jaunts" of the 18th and 19th centuries largely reduced a storied and vibrant culture to a grotesque stereotype and invested the authority for interpreting and representing Gaelic culture in a foreign society that had demonstrated consistent ignorance and hostility toward it. There were two significant outcomes from this that are relevant here. The first is that in asserting hegemony over the interpretation, celebration, and representation of Gaelic culture, English society actively undermined the status of the Gaels as an independent cultural group, effectively subsuming them into English culture as a merely colourful — indeed, wildly colourful — strand of their own society.

The success of this marginalization is manifold, but the fundamental problem has been that Gaels and their culture have been forcibly added to the mainstream. As discussed earlier in this report, Scottish Gaels have been redefined as "British" and, due to the meaning invested in that word, as "English." The Nova Scotia Arts Council, for instance, has used this basic model in devising its arts policy for Nova Scotia. Tim Leary, Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Arts Council, explained that the 1996 act that established the Nova Scotia Arts Council, "expresses the desire that the Arts Council be mindful of the validity of African, Mi'kmaq and Acadian cultures and seeks to be inclusive of creative arts rooted in those cultural communities when assessing applications for support" (Telephone interview, Caroline Cameron: Tim Leary, March 2001). Leary went on to say that the Arts Council had designated representation for Acadian, African, and Mi'kmaq cultures because that assured a good knowledge base and acknowledged the influence of culture on artistic expression, since culture is a mode of communicating within and among cultural communities. He concluded that if these communities were significant in number, their efforts should be reflected in artistic expression. When asked why no such provision was made for Gaelic culture, he replied that it was "part of the dominant culture" and that normal policy applied. He also pointed out that the Arts Council did not involve itself in "heritage" funding.

Gaels are shut out of the major institutions of Nova Scotian society because theirs is a minority language and culture, but because of the way their culture is perceived — as a part of the dominant culture — they are also excluded from the institutions and agencies designed to offset that sort of exclusion. On their own, these would be significant obstacles, but the second problem associated with this loss of cultural hegemony — the long history of manipulation of their culture as some sort of meaningless bauble by outside interests — exacerbates this situation.

Tourism did not really begin to develop as an industry in Nova Scotia until MacMillan's road-building campaigns of the 1920s encouraged government to take a more professional approach to attracting tourists to Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia's Scottish culture was seen as a significant asset — regrettably, not as it was lived and celebrated in Nova Scotia's Gaelic communities but rather, as had happened in Scotland, as urban-based aficionados, often quite ignorant of the culture, imagined it to be. By the 1930s, the Gaelic College was founded, and as will be discussed shortly, it proceeded to promote imported stereotype over the native Gaelic culture of the province.

The gulf between lived culture and image was becoming evident by the 1930s. During this period in the late 1930s and the 1940s, the Canadian military made extensive use of Highland imagery in its recruiting campaigns across the country, giving the impression that Canada was a country of strong Gaelic tradition, while at the same time banning the Gaelic language as one of the potentially subversive "foreign" languages to be prohibited from telecommunications for the duration of the war. Predictably, Highland pride was stung by such a characterization, and a campaign was initiated in Nova Scotia to have the ban lifted. With both Angus L. MacDonald in one of the more powerful federal ministerial portfolios and "Little Danny" MacLennan in the Senate in Ottawa, the success of the campaign was virtually a foregone conclusion, but the defence of the language offered by parliament — that the language was "distinctly British" — was perhaps more damning than the ban itself had been.

Throughout the 1940s, and possibly encouraged by the popularity of these Highland regiments, tourist promoters in Nova Scotia began heavily promoting the use of tartan. It was already mandatory for children at the Gaelic College to wear tartan, but it also began appearing on shop staff and waitresses in various tourism facilities. By the 1950s, official tartans had been invented for Nova Scotia and shortly afterwards for Cape Breton. Just as the myriad clan tartans that appeared in 19th-century Scotland were created in the industrial Lowlands rather than in the rural Highlands, the new official tartans of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton were created outside the rural Gaelic strongholds of the province. While Nova Scotia tourism gave positive encouragement to this development, the "Lone Sheiling" was constructed in the Cape Breton Highlands National Park to celebrate the famous (and fake) Highland immigrant song, the "Canadian Boat Song," which, it appears, was composed in the Lowlands by someone who had never been to Canada and did not know a word of Gaelic.

While much of what was happening was rooted in good intentions, Gaels were often very aware of the way in which their culture was being exploited and manipulated but not supported. In 1955, for example, massive celebrations with a Scottish theme were planned for the opening of the Canso Causeway joining Cape Breton to the mainland — or the other way around, depending on where your sympathies happened to be. A massive army of pipers were to march across the causeway (well represented by numerous pipe majors from the Scottish Lowlands) and a Gaelic address was to be given by Rev. Stanley MacDonald, brother to the late Premier, Angus L. MacDonald, who had passed away the year before. Amidst the supposed salute to Gaeldom, the pipes, the tartan, and pageantry, Father Stanley was told by organizers to cut his Gaelic speech back to give extra time to the "more important" events that were scheduled. He complied, and if the accounts of people who were there are accurate, he used the short time he had to give the organizers and assembled dignitaries the worst and most efficient roasting that they ever received. The roars of laughter from the assembled crowd confirmed to the organizers, who were entirely ignorant of Gaelic, that it had been an excellent speech, for which Reverend MacDonald was warmly thanked, and which provoked still more laughter from the audience. The Minister of Highways soldiered on with his expression of appreciation for the Gaelic speech, concluding that, "I only wish I could have understood it," prompting still another wave of laughter from the crowd.

In the 1950s, promoters merely pushed invented and romanticized imagery to the fore and Gaelic to the back, but in the 1960s, the trivialization of the province's Gaelic culture hit an all-time low when a new scheme was hit upon to develop a recognizable tourist icon — a Cibou puffin, obligingly attired in "traditional" Highland clothing.

> MacPuffin is more elegant sartorially than his immediate ancestors, for in addition to his black beak and orange feet he sports a Highland bonnet and a crummock (walking stick to you) under his left wing. It is hoped that what the "Oakpik" is to

> the Northland, "MacPuffin, Laird of Cibou," will be to Cape Breton (*Atlantic Advocate*, 1966: 58–59)

Contrast the institutional promotion of Gaelic culture with what was going on at the time within the Gaelic community, described by John Shaw, who had recently come to the area from the United States as a teenager:

> In the summer of 1963, Inverness County, Cape Breton, was still largely Gaelic speaking and the annual parish concert held in early July was one of the main events of the summer. As a young student from the outside, working during the holidays on the glebe farm in the small rural community of Glendale, I had not fully understood the necessity of the elaborate preparation by the people of the parish, lasting up to a week and involving everything from fencing to building a raised stage and the constant monitoring of weather reports over the local radio station. It all became apparent when the day arrived and the cars and pickups — in the hundreds, and overflowing with relatives, neighbours, and friends — converged on the farm, filling the enormous hayfields cleared early for the occasion and eventually lining both sides of the Trans-Canada Highway. From the moment the concert began the excitement was palpable — a festive atmosphere surrounding an annual event where kinship groups were reunited, friendships renewed, news exchanged, all underlain by the serious business of celebrating the song, music and dance central to the life of the region. No less powerful, from the visitor's point of view at least, was the experience of Highland culture from the eighteenth century performed with a natural competence and vigour which, even with the benefit of a PA system and floodlights, had little if any relation to the modern concert stages of North America or Europe. Performers were neatly — almost formally — dressed, yet in their manner they were unassuming, often appearing shy when introduced on stage. The audience, however, knew what to expect. Whenever a fiddler made a particularly skillful work on the transition from strathspey to reel, the listeners, many of whom knew the tunes and were following the playing intently, responded with a spontaneous swell of applause. During the Gaelic songs people in the audience joined the chorus with gusto. (Shaw, *Brìgh an Òrain*, 2000: IX)

Tourism promotion did eventually get around to recognizing the existence of these sorts of Scottish community gatherings, but never, it seems, to understanding the depth of their roots or the richness of the culture that they celebrated. In a 1985 brochure, for example, tourists were assured that they could have a wonderful and entirely superficial experience with the province's Gaelic culture. 'You don't even have to be Scottish to know how to pronounce ceilidh. Just say, "Kaylee," and it's probably all the Gaelic you need to know!' ("Nova Scotia Ceilidh, 1985")

This trivialization of Gaelic culture went hand in hand with sincere efforts to give it more prominence (at least as the culture was imagined to exist). In the 1970s, tourism officials investigated the idea of putting together a major Scottish cultural event in Nova Scotia. They decided that the International Gathering of the Clans model, created in Scotland in the 1950s, would be an excellent tourism vehicle, making use of the province's own Gaelic tradition. They also recognized that Nova Scotia's Gaelic tradition was unique and sought to make adaptations to the basic format to recognize this fact, as their 1979 pamphlet discussed:

> The sociology of the Scottish community is unlike that of Scotland, and the organizers were zealous in their attempts to give identity to these New World cultural developments while at the same time demonstrating the traditional customs of Scotland itself. (p. 5)

Unlike the Scottish gathering of the ostensible Highland clans, which was held entirely in the Lowlands (a ten day festival in Edinburgh in 1977), the Nova Scotian version of the international gathering made an effort to root at least some of its planned activities in actual Highland communities in the province. It decided that its first gathering in 1979 would extend to 48 days and that much of it would be simply grafted over existing summer concerts in the Gaelic districts of Nova Scotia, with the gathering providing enhanced marketing opportunities. This was a positive departure from the Scottish model (and one that would be adopted 20 years later by the Celtic Colours festival in Cape Breton). Organizers for Nova Scotia's first International Gathering of the Clans also seemed to recognize that the "clans" were a Gaelic phenomenon and that the Gaelic language was an important part of the Nova Scotian experience. The 1979 program (a four-page folder) had a bilingual front page, complete with the ubiquitous but nonetheless Gaelic greeting, "Ceud Mile Fàilte" (A Hundred Thousand Welcomes) and attempted to include other Gaelic content. Unfortunately, the attempt to communicate that Gaelic culture (also repeated in a series of booklets produced in the run-up to the gathering) resulted in an uncomfortable mix of stereotype and error.

In one section of the official gathering pamphlet, visitors were enjoined to, "Say, 'Ciamar a tha sibh?' to your ain folk at the clan gatherings," mixing a traditional Gaelic greeting with what seemed to be the *de rigeur* pseudo-Lowland Scots speech that accompanied events of this type wherever they were held in the world. An Acadian equivalent might be to combine a traditional French greeting with a stylized form of French-accented English, such as one might hear from the famous Peter Sellers character, Inspector Clousseau. The inner page of the brochure also proudly included a picture of a Gaelic street sign in Pugwash, supposedly as an example of the depth of the Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia, but the spelling was gibberish — *Sràid Ah Rigit* (presumably, *Sràid an Righ* — King Street). A larger version of this same picture was elevated to the front page of the April pamphlet. In the pamphlet released in May, tourism officials made an even more embarrassing gaff (which was still being repeated 20 years later) by claiming, "it is reputed that more Gaelic is spoken in Nova Scotia than in Scotland." If anyone had taken the care to consult readily available census data, they would have seen that the claim was ludicrous. There were, in the 1970s, more than 88,000 Gaelic speakers in Scotland compared to fewer than 1,500 Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia.

Errors, of course, are unavoidable, and there is a particular need to keep promotional tourist literature light and upbeat, but even with those caveats, the standards for interpreting and presenting Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture seemed especially low. That and the fact that Halifax, well outside Gaelic Nova Scotia, would be the main focus of the gathering, and the Nova Scotia Tattoo, with virtually no basis in Gaelic culture, would be developed as its centerpiece, suggested very little engagement with Nova Scotia's Gaelic community in the development of this supposedly Scottish cultural event and very little appreciation of the culture's values, strengths, and needs. In fact, outside the existing community organized events, which had been going for decades on their own, there was little or nothing about the International Gathering of the Clans that was connected to the native Gaelic traditions of the province.

In the second gathering in 1987, that disjunction seemed to grow rather than shrink. *The Souvenir Guide Book, 1987, International Gathering of the Clans*, even included a substantial article entitled "The Origins of the Gaelic Language," which emphasized Gaelic's *lack* of importance in Scotland. It noted the foreignness of the language and culture to most Scots and pointed out that those few in the Lowlands who took an interest in the language did so out of a sense that they were regaining a part of the heritage of their forefathers (the tone of the article suggesting that they were mistaken) or, incredibly, given Gaelic's low status, because they wished to "increase their social status" (p. 9). No mention was made of the fact that the "clans" that were being ostensibly celebrated by the gathering were entirely rooted in the culture of Gaelic Scotland. Neither was the existence of the Gaelic language in Nova Scotia mentioned.

The 1987 International Gathering of the Clans was a sterling example of how manipulated Gaelic cultural images were used to promote Nova Scotia with little or no regard to the validity of what was being sold or to the impact such a presentation would have on the native culture. What was on parade that year was not the indigenous Gaelic tradition of the province but the imported traditions of the Scottish Lowlands. Gaelic culture was studiously ignored, and the language, which was its most distinctive feature, was publicly dismissed in the promotional literature. Certainly, a clear message was sent about its lack of importance. At a time when there was not sufficient funding in the provincial coffers to keep the Gaelic program going in Inverness County schools, an estimated $50,000 dollars could be found to bring over a pipe band from the Scottish Lowlands to celebrate Nova Scotia's Gaelic heritage. (Estimated costs courtesy of piper, Allan J. MacKenzie) Scottish scholar Norman MacDonald pointed out the sad irony of the process.

> The importation of "culture" from Scotland has been a noticeable feature of recent touristic promotions in Nova Scotia: bagpipe and drum bands, an extension of the Victorian ideal of the fighting romantic Highlander, have become a popular fit for the stereotype. The Lothian and Borders Police Pipe Band toured the Province as guests of the government, and throughout, including their performance at Comunn Gaidhlig Cheap Breatuinn (The Cape Breton Gaelic Society) were treated like champions. Not many were able to spot the multi-layered irony of paying homage and paying cash to a Lowland Pipe Band, in tribute to Nova Scotia's Highland Heart ... (MacDonald 1988, 137)

> … this … must, then, in view of the scale, cost and seriousness of the project, occupy a unique place in Canadian cultural history as the acceptance of an erroneous stereotype by an ethnic language promotion body and, by extrapolation, the relegating to a lower level of merit, of one's own country's demonstrably superior products. (MacDonald 137)

It needs to be pointed out that this was not entirely a case of an insensitive bureaucracy imposing its will on a powerless community. It appears that organizers, especially in the early years, sincerely attempted to engage the Gaelic community but somehow failed to connect. It is understandable that they should have had a series of inaccurate preconceptions about Gaelic and Scottish culture given the lack of Gaelic content in institutional life anywhere and the contrastingly omnipresent imagery of "Highland" culture, which was rooted in the romantic movement and in Victorian tourist fashions. However, they also faced the obstacle of finding the legitimate tradition in a community that had suffered wasting assimilation. The natural leadership of that community, to whom the Department of Tourism would naturally turn first, were probably, with notable exceptions, the worst representatives to consult with, having begun to adopt many of these superficial symbols themselves as Gaelic culture slipped increasingly away.

> The 'cultural badges' of the Highlander and the manufactured tradition that supports it are not only commercially useful as a tourist attraction, but also emotionally sustaining. They allow people who have been assimilated into the mainstream to feel as if they are still part of an ethnic group. Shaw and Mertz reported that the Gaelic language was perceived as being intellectually and economically impractical by the very people who supposedly supported the Gaelic revival. This manufactured 'Scottish' identity can furthermore be used as an effective political tool by people who have been more thoroughly assimilated into the Anglo-Canadian mainstream, against those people who are still maintaining a traditional Gaelic way of life. The lived tradition, which has more to do with cultural patterns embedded within family and community than with 'cultural badges', may be rendered invisible. The people actually living this tradition may then be perceived as 'backward' because they are not proficient in mainstream forms. (Cox 1994, 34)

Such a social dynamic presents any agency interested in engaging with Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia with some rather daunting and potentially controversial challenges.

The taste for this particular type of tourism event seems to have waned considerably since that period, but the imagery still forms the basis for tourism promotion in Nova Scotia. In the 2000 edition of the Department of Tourism's *Doers and Dreamers* guide to Nova Scotia, such decorative "Highland" images outnumber those of Gaels involved in traditional cultural pursuits — fiddling, milling, step dancing, and so on, by four to one. Indeed, representations of the Gaelic-style fiddling tradition, for which Cape Breton is so famous, are nearly as common in Acadian advertisements as they are in those depicting Gaelic communities. While the stereotypical images associated with "Highland" culture represent an immediately recognizable symbol with obvious marketing advantages, there are reasons why they should be cautiously used. The first and most obvious is that they are not rooted in the local culture and do not reflect or support that local culture. Secondly, because they are not rooted in local culture, they also fail to offer Nova Scotia a competitive marketing advantage over other areas that organize similar "Highland" events but do not have Nova Scotia's living Gaelic culture to draw from. Cultural tourists are discerning tourists, and the use of recognizable but essentially false imagery will eventually be self-defeating.

Cultural Promotion

The many strategies that have been employed since the 1920s road-building era to promote Nova Scotia's Scottish culture are too numerous and complex to analyse in any depth here. However, it is worth examining several ongoing programs to get a sense not only of some of the major trends but also of how initiatives differ and compare between institutions connected to government and smaller organizations more closely dependent on local Gaelic communities. The following three, the Gaelic College, The Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum, and the Christmas Island Feis, demonstrate something of a sliding scale in terms of size, government involvement, and responsiveness to Gaelic cultural needs.

The Gaelic College

The Gaelic College was established at St. Ann's, Cape Breton, by Rev. A. W. R. MacKenzie and officially opened by Premier Angus L. MacDonald in July 1939. MacKenzie was a non-Gaelic speaker from the Scottish Highlands who had immigrated as a very young man to Boston just prior to World War I. When war broke out, he enlisted in the Canadian Army after being smitten by a recruiting poster featuring a soldier in Highland Dress. After the war, he attended divinity school in Ontario before coming to Nova Scotia to practice his ministry. Fascinated by the romantic tale of Rev. Norman MacLeod, the Presbyterian minister who took his flock from St. Ann's, Cape Breton, half-way around the world to settle in Waipu, New Zealand, in the mid-19th century, MacKenzie found himself a parish in the area and soon after began his efforts to preserve and promote the Highland traditions of Nova Scotia — at least as he, a non-Gaelic-speaking, recent immigrant understood them. That proved to be not very well.

Starting a college to celebrate and promote Gaelic in Cape Breton in the late 1930s would have been a daunting task even for someone well versed in the culture. St. Ann's, the proposed location for the college, chosen because it was the site of Rev. Norman MacLeod's former farm, was in the middle of a declining rural district with a failing population. During the 1930s, the number of Gaelic speakers in the province had declined by half, falling to 12,000 by the 1941 census, and confidence in the culture was at an extremely low ebb. While rural areas had not suffered nearly as severely as urban areas during the Great Depression, there was certainly little money around for such a venture, either in the local community or in the public coffers.

However, the venture had a potentially powerful political ally in the person of Premier Angus L. MacDonald who was interested in promoting Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia. The economy was also set to expand heavily in the post-war era, meaning more money would be available for such development schemes from public sources and more people could afford to travel to Cape Breton as tourists. Hundreds of dollars were pledged and sent in from Cape Breton, Halifax, Boston, Detroit, Toronto, and New York.

St. Ann's was also in the middle of one of the several very strongly Gaelic-speaking districts still remaining in the province. With its fluent command of the language and with a singing tradition that was truly world class, the district could provide expertise to support the college's Gaelic program. The district was not, and appears never to have been, particularly noted for the strength of its music and dance culture, but there were several other areas not too distant that were very strong in that regard and that could have supplied leading cultural exponents, unique in the world, for that aspect of the college's cultural program.

In the early years, the signs were promising. The local community enthusiastically pitched in, clearing land, felling trees, shaping logs, and constructing buildings. Local people taught Gaelic at the college and in the community along with notable Gaelic scholars and advocates such as Rev. Stanley MacDonald, Jonathan G. MacKinnon, J. J. MacKinnon, James MacNeil, Rev. Dr. P. J. Nicholson, Rev. Duncan Rankin, and Rev. Donald MacLean Sinclair, among others. Small Gaelic schools were established in the area and further afield. And although the college operated for only a few weeks in the summer, courses were offered in Gaelic language, literature, philosophy, and history as well as in music, dance, and social economics and were attended by both local people and visitors, such as Charles Dunn of Harvard University. The Gaelic College even produced a bilingual magazine, *The Canadian-American Gael*, to promote college activities. Unfortunately, things began to go very badly wrong at the Gaelic College at an early date.

When MacKenzie established the Gaelic College Foundation in 1938, its aims were essentially to promote the traditions and culture and especially the language of the Highlanders who had come to Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, MacKenzie had a very poor understanding of what those traditions were and was far more interested in the romantic, theatrical aspects of Highland culture that he has absorbed in his native Scotland. Through the 1940's 50's and 60's, the College gradually turned away from the natural expression of Gaelic Culture found in Nova Scotia and toward imported stereotypes. The focus shifted from local Gaelic cultural development and education to attracting visitors to a romanticized presentation of a largely imaginary Highland culture.

In the first edition of *The Canadian American Gael*, the title, "The Romantic Nova Scotia Highlands," bespoke the theme of a romantic survival of the culture of the mystical Highlands in the New World. Local Gaelic singers, posing somewhat awkwardly but with dignity in their conservative suits singing psalms were a study in contrast with the professional photographed Susan Jarrell, "The Shirley Temple of Ontario", a gold medal winning Gaelic College student attired in dazzling, perfectly tailored Highland Regalia.

By 1950, the Gaelic College cut back on its language and culture offerings and diverted more resources to the "folk art" side of its program. (*The Canadian American Gael*, 1950: 7) Toward the end of that decade, in 1958, the Gaelic College and particularly A. W. R. MacKenzie were stung by the very public criticism of the Rev. Somerled MacMillan. Rev. MacMillan was one of the high profile "clan" personalities brought from Scotland each year as guests of the College. MacMillan, the bard and historian of the Clan MacMillan, publicly denounced the College's activities as a "farce and a phoney [*sic*]" and seemed to particularly delight in revealing the college's lack of commitment to the Gaelic language by making his barbed attack in Gaelic to A. W. R. MacKenzie's face, fully aware that MacKenzie would be unable to understand or respond.

It was an aggressive and, by all appearance, ill-mannered attack. Not surprisingly, the College reacted strongly to the criticism — unfortunately, not by strengthening its Gaelic program. Instead, it responded by issuing a pocket history the following year in *The Canadian American Gael*, in which it took full credit for single-handedly reviving Gaelic in Nova Scotia. The article was entitled, "The re-birth of Gaelic Culture in Nova Scotia: a Gaelic College Inspired Revival."

> The establishment of the Gaelic College in 1939 set a fire on the hills and in the glens of Cape Breton that still burns brightly even into the wooden areas of mainland counties such as Pictou, Cumberland and Antigonish. For it was then, in 1939, the Inauguration of a Memorial Gaelic College started the development of a spontaneous, surging revival of Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia, which today (1959) continued with vigour and unabated, not merely [sic] as a Gaelic Language Movement, but in a wider sense, the present renaissance may be described as a veritable Celtic Culture Movement, embracing all of the worth while arts and crafts of Gaelic culture. (*The Canadian American Gael*: 1)
>
> In the year preceding [sic] 1939 the Gael in Cape Breton and in fact in all of Nova Scotia (with the single exception of Antigonish county) could be described in the lines of Sir Walter Scott, of the '45 –
>
> "There is a mist on the Mountain
> and night on the Vale,
> But more dark is the sleep
> of the Sons of the Gael." (*The Canadian American Gael*, 1959: 1)

Cape Breton, which has had the most conservative survival of the language and the traditional art forms, was accused of being "asleep" and of neglecting Gaelic culture, while Antigonish County (in point of fact, Antigonish town), which has gone over in a big way to the imported forms of romantic era cultural expressive — Highland Games, Highland Dancing, Modern piping, and the heavy use of "Highland" dress — was praised for its cultural conservatism and attention to its Gaelic heritage.

More tellingly, within five years of describing this surviving revival of Gaelic culture in the province, which the Gaelic College claimed was carrying on with unabated vigour, MacKenzie admitted that in fact Gaelic had all but disappeared from the College program.

> In the years 1939-49 the Gaelic content was about 50 per cent in Gaelic Mod programmes [sic], while today, (1964) Gaelic language has dropped to about less than ten per cent. (*The Canadian American Gael*, 1964: 39)

This steady increase of romanticized tradition at the expense of the Gaelic language at the College was underscored that same year in *The Canadian American Gael*, which presented "clanship" as being "equally important with the Gaelic language as a vehicle perpetuating the true spirit of Highland Scotland to generations yet unborn." (*The Canadian American Gael*, 1964: 39)

In order to meet his desired ends, A. W. R. MacKenzie had to rely heavily on instructors and dignitaries imported from outside the rural Gaelic districts, since locals had, for the most part, not adopted the stereotypes he associated with Gaelic culture. In the process, the College further undermined confidence in local Gaelic tradition by setting up a mechanism of external mediation of that Gaelic tradition right in the heart of one of the more important Gaelic Communities in Cape Breton. The college began teaching younger generations, who were not as strongly versed in the Gaelic language and culture as the older members of the community were, that the imported cultural products and stereotypes were not only valid representations of their culture but that they were far superior to the forms of cultural expression that could be found locally. MacKenzie had managed to import and establish at the College an essentially non-Gaelic, urban, Lowland Scottish interpretation on Highland culture. Local Gaelic tradition was effectively purged. In this respect, he had been supported by the media and the emerging tourism industry.

The 1970's were a time of considerable turmoil at the college. Heavily in debt and disrepair, it became a ward of the provincial government, received massive funding to upgrade its facilities, and witnessed numerous changes to its organizational structure. From 1974 on, the Gaelic College received substantial annual operating funds from the provincial government.

By the late 1970's the language program appeared to achieve enhanced status at the College. In 1978, Catriona Parsons, a native Gaelic speaker from Lewis, in Scotland, was hired as Gaelic instructor, and an organized program of Gaelic study was initiated. It was in 1978 as well that Cape Breton fiddle and step dance were added to the summer program. Fiddle and step dance are currently among the most popular subjects among students attending the Gaelic college summer program.

Perhaps more tellingly, the Gaelic College got its first Gaelic-speaking director in 1983, in the person of Norman MacDonlald, a native of the Isle of Skye. Links were also forged with the University College of Cape Breton during this period of change, suggesting that the College might reanimate its more serious academic offerings of the early years. Current agreements have resulted in the transfer of 40 texts from the University College of Cape Breton library to the Gaelic College library and have facilitated the copying of invaluable Beaton Institute archival recordings. Links between the Gaelic College and University College of Cape Breton are still being formalized. (Interview: Hector MacNeil, March 2001)

Hector MacNeil of Castlebay, Cape Breton, joined the college as another Gaelic language instructor starting in 1989. (MacNeil, 2001) The working arrangement was somewhat informal. MacNeil worked seasonally at the College, receiving a contract offer each fall for the following summer program. During the directorship of Jim MacAulay in the late 1980's, Gaelic immersion weekends were instituted. In 1989, Catriona Parsons produced a Gaelic learning kit under the auspices of the Gaelic college Foundation and with the support of Mr. MacAulay. *Gàidhlig Troimh Chòmhradh* (Gaelic through Conversation) consisted of a study guide and three 90-minute tapes. In 1991, module two of the course was produced.

Sam MacPhee, a native of New Brunswick, replaced MacAulay in 1992 and is currently the Executive Director. Under his direction, Gaelic gained ground at the College through the 1990's. In 1994, the third and final module of *Gàidhlig Troimh Chòmhradh* was produced. The success of the Gaelic immersion weekends encouraged a transition to a full-week Gaelic immersion course during the summer program. In 1998 Hector MacNeil was promoted to a permanent year-round position as Gaelic Program Director. This is the first full-time Gaelic post created at the college. While MacNeil is now a full-time employee, the College remains a seasonal institution, offering courses only in the spring and summer.

MacNeil's language classes focus on Cape Breton Gaelic, and every session features local milling songs as a vehicle of instruction as well as instruction in the traditional delivery of these songs. MacNeil shares his teaching duties with other part-time instructions, drawn from the local community, during the summer sessions. Since assuming the position of Gaelic Program Director at the Gaelic College, MacNeil has made himself available throughout Cape Breton to offer classes in Gaelic language and song and has been a presenter in occasional cultural workshops held by various schools in the College's off-season. He has also committed to going into schools on the North Shore, Iona, and Christmas Island on a weekly basis for extended periods in order to support initiatives in those communities.

Whereas in the early years of the college, the local, Gaelic piping tradition was largely ignored and even actively discouraged, recent years have seen the College take an active interest in the native Nova Scotia piping tradition. In 1995, the College brought Scottish piper, Hamish Moore, over to teach traditional piping. Moore had developed a keen interest in the traditional fiddle music and dance styles of Cape Breton and later in the island's remnant Gaelic-style piping tradition. He was convinced that this entire musical package represented a tradition that had been lost in the Scottish Highlands. The College continued in following years to bring in Hamish Moore and his son, Finn Moore, as well as Allan MacDonald of Glen Uig, Scotland and Fred Morrison, of South Uist, Scotland all of whom share an intense interest in the traditional Gaelic style of piping in Nova Scotia. In addition, more emphasis was given to the Gaelic roots of the tradition.

Traditional Nova Scotia style pipers also began to receive some acknowledgement and employment, culminating in the appointment of John MacLean as Pipe Major of the Gaelic College Pipe Band. In a memorable and highly symbolic moment, Alex Currie, the last of the Nova Scotian pipers raised in the tradition of piping, piped at the college concert several years ago. Too old and frail to blow the pipes, he had John MacLean (who also happened to be his nephew) do the blowing while he turned the chanter around and did the fingering. Currie has since passed away but the college now offers, at long last, traditional Cape Breton Piping taught by John MacLean.

The College also sought, in the early years, to become a centre of material folk arts. Gaelic material culture, however, tends to be simple, functional and not particularly interesting to tourists. The College sought, therefore, to capitalize on the demand for tartan and tartan products. The pressure to produce such items for sale was fairly intense and not restricted to the Gaelic College as Ian R. MacKay's work, *The Quest For The Folk*, indicates.

In later decades, the material crafts program took at strong turn back to the traditions of Gaelic Nova Scotia. Evelyn (Dunbar) MacLeod, who came to the Gaelic College from Pictou to instruct in Highland Dance and married locally, took an interest in the textile program at the college and began to study the weaving patterns, work processes and lore native to the Gaelic communities of Cape Breton. She began to instruct in this more traditional aspect of textile production, including the old overshot weaving patterns and to carefully document the traditions she researched. In 1997, Mrs. MacLeod participated in a workshop series on weaving in North Uist, Scotland where she was able to introduce older patterns from Cape Breton, which has been brought from Scotland by the early immigrants but which had fallen out of use in the Scottish Highlands and been lost. Mrs. MacLeod hopes to publish a book on the subject of traditional textiles in Nova Scotia in the near future.

The Gaelic College operates as a partially private, partially provincial government institution. Government appoints members to the Board of Directors through the department of Tourism and Culture and grants the college $220,000 in annual operating funds, a reduction from previous levels. Subject to the approval of the Board of Directors, the college implements its own development and instructional programs and selects its own staff. It also raises additional monies through course fees and by other private means, such as concerts, conferences, gift-shop sales, and fund-raising. Day to day running of the College is left to the Executive Director, Sam MacPhee. In addition to support and maintenance staff, the college employs 46 instructors for its seasonal programs.

The Gaelic College season begins with a weekend syllabus during the March Break and a two-week Elderhostel program beginning in mid-June. The main summer program gets under way the last week of June and extends to the end of August. It is followed by another two-week Elderhostel program that ends the college's season in the third week of September. The College also offers a small, varying program of concerts and acts as a venue for conferences.

The Gaelic College has a modest library which houses about 600 texts, 180 cassette tapes, 70 hours of Gaelic field recordings made by folklorist Ralph Rintzler in Cape Breton, courtesy of the Smithsonian Institute (via University College of Cape Breton) and ten CD's of *Fèis An Eilein* society in Christmas Island.

The College currently offers courses in Gaelic language and song, fiddle, piano, step dancing, history and culture, traditional Cape Breton piping, Highland bagpipes, pipe maintenance, Highland dance, Scottish country dance, weaving and spinning, small pipes, bodhran, Celtic harp, piano accordion, and whistle.

That the College offers access to courses outside the native Gaelic tradition is not necessarily a bad thing. Courses in pipe maintenance and small pipes, for instance, are easily adaptable to the needs of those interested in Nova Scotia's traditional forms of pipe music. Courses in bodhran and piano accordion, by contrast, are likely to raise a few eyebrows in traditional music circles in most parts of Cape Breton, since the piano accordion is not widely admired, while the bodhran is generally regarded as an instrument which sounds good within its own Irish tradition but is not much appreciated when played with Nova Scotia's traditional Scottish music. Courses in Scottish country dancing are similarly difficult to understand, since this art form, imported to Scotland from England, was unknown in Cape Breton prior to its appearance at the Gaelic College. (Rhodes 1966, 275) Many feel that the College should develop excellence in the native traditions of Nova Scotia before expanding into other often very questionable areas, particularly since the College's stated objectives are to promote local Gaelic tradition.

The Gaelic College clearly has some challenges ahead. The past cultural orientation of the college toward imported tradition is lessened but is nonetheless still evident. Allayed to this is a tendency to import instructors in Gaelic cultural arts to an area of extremely high employment renowned for its Gaelic tradition. The College also needs to communicate to the public what its goals and priorities are. Considering the admitted importance of the Gaelic language to Nova Scotia's heritage and the perilous state of the language, this might be a propitious time for the Gaelic College to review its priorities and make the public aware of its goals and of the challenges it faces.

The Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum

The Nova Scotia Highland Village is a museum situated in Iona, Cape Breton overlooking Grand Narrows and the Bras d'Or Lakes. It was established "to protect, interpret and further the collection of buildings and artifacts" and "to preserve and promote the Scottish Highland and Island culture as found in Nova Scotia." The inspiration for the village was the "Clachan" a replica Highland village that was created for the British Empire Exhibition in Glasgow in 1938. A delegation from Nova Scotia, including Premier Angus L. MacDonald, was among the 1.5 million visitors who toured the Clachan, and they decided that a similar initiative should be attempted in Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia version would include buildings associated with Scottish Highland life in the province and also a museum devoted to the Scot in North America. The outbreak of World War II delayed any further movement on the village until the 1950s.

In 1953, W. L. Fillmore and C. I. N. MacLeod met with the Premier, Angus L. MacDonald, to rejuvenate the plan to establish the Nova Scotia Highland Village. He was supportive but passed away a few months later before much progress had been made. Without Angus L. to gently nudge things along the government was reluctant to commit any funding, but Fillmore and MacLeod persevered. They took the plan to the Nova Scotia Association of Scottish Societies (NSASS) and a site selection committee was established under the chairmanship of C. I. N. MacLeod.

The members were Rev. D. A. MacKinnon, Pictou Landing; Rod MacDonald, Sydney; W. L. Fillmore, Amherst; and Steven J. MacKinnon, Antigonish. The essential plan was "to house an educational and cultural centre" for "Scottish heritage and traditions, containing the following sections and facilities: Library, Displays, Short Courses, Gatherings, Pageants, Plays" and to build up over time a physical site featuring a Highland Black House and some early pioneer buildings.

Various communities applied to be the host site for the Highland Village, and the selection committee eventually narrowed the choice to Pictou and Grand Narrows. The Grand Narrows delegation, led by bard Hugh F. MacKenzie and Rev. A. D. MacKinnon, made an extremely strong case for their district and did so entirely in Gaelic. They also backed up their application with written support from the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 24 (Iona); from the Victoria County Council, endorsing the Grand Narrows site as the most suitable in the county; from the local Home and School Association; and with six letters from local people, five of which were written in Gaelic. The only things working against their application were the poor condition of the roads and the strength of Pictou's political connections.

In spite of the strength of Gaelic culture in Grand Narrows and the superior quality of their application, the initial vote by the selection committee in 1956 was deadlocked. It was only after Rev. D. A. MacKinnon reconsidered his vote that Grand Narrows was chosen. The strength of Pictou's political backing was immediately evident. Fillmore, who was strongly committed to his own area of the province, tore up a cheque he had been given by the Pugwash millionaire Cyrus Eaton, who was also keenly committed to a site in the Pugwash–Pictou area. This dramatic flexing of political muscle was not sufficient to undermine the strength of Grand Narrows' cultural case. Fillmore then moved that a second site be built in Pictou County after the first was established in Cape Breton. This was unanimously carried and in March of 1956, Grand Narrows was endorsed as the site of the Nova Scotia Highland Village.

Unfortunately, meaningful support from government and from NSASS slowly evaporated after Grand Narrows was chosen as the site for the Nova Scotia Highland Village. As a result, between 1956 and 1962, the locally based Highland Village Society took increasing responsibility for the initiative and eventually became solely responsible. In 1959 the Highland Village was officially incorporated, and in 1962, the first Highland Village Day was held to draw attention to the site and to raise money. Some 1,500 people attended what would become a very successful annual Scottish concert featuring Gaelic song, music, and dance. Such local support would be critical in keeping the Highland Village going.

In 1967, the Highland Village Society was able to increase the size of the museum building and make arrangements to have it open daily from June to September thanks largely to Centennial Year funding from the federal government. In the 1970s, continued work was being done on expanding the site and improving the physical representation. More effort was made to focus on the life of Gaels in Nova Scotia rather than on bare displays of Highland Scottish buildings. This was made very difficult by the fact that provincial historical institutions, such as the Nova Scotia Museum and the Provincial Archives, were not of much assistance, as little research of any sort had been done on the topic of Highland Scottish immigration and settlement.

Private citizens had long been the mainstay of the village, as corporate and institutional support had been miserly, but in 1972, increased external funding began to materialize. In that year, Devco assisted in the opening of the Highland Heights Motel and Restaurant adjacent to the site. In 1973 a Local Initiatives Program grant of $32,860 and another Devco grant of $57,000 allowed for the construction of many new buildings at the site. Major grants from the Department of Regional Economic Expansion in the late 1970s and early 1980s were also used to improve the physical representation of the Highland settlers' life in Nova Scotia. However, while successful in procuring grants for capital projects, the museum struggled to find operational funding. It enjoyed status as a community museum but could not earn "branch status" in the Nova Scotia Museum family, which would have made it a provincial site with dedicated funding.

In 1984, the Highland Village began to turn its attention to the long-neglected cultural side of its program. Both in the original 1953 proposal "to house an educational and cultural centre" and in the village's later mission statement "to preserve and promote the Scottish Highland and Island culture as found in Nova Scotia," Gaelic culture had been a foundational part of the Highland Village's raison d'être. With funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Culture, Recreation and Fitness and from the federal Secretary of State, attempts were made to turn rhetoric into reality. A Gaelic program headed up by Jim Watson was instituted to improve the fluency of village interpreters and staff in the Gaelic language and to make better use of Gaelic conversation, songs, and music within the site. An innovative community outreach program of instruction was also developed. New marketing initiatives and a genealogy service (Roots Cape Breton) were also put in motion. Unfortunately, the Gaelic initiative was short lived. (*Naidheachd a' Chlachain*, Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum, Iona, Winter 2000: 6–13)

Despite the promising start, the Gaelic program soon unraveled. Board members of the Nova Scotia Highland Village claimed that they encountered deep hostility to enhanced Gaelic programming at the village in political circles. They indicated that they were told in no uncertain terms that they were to back off on their Gaelic program if they wanted to keep their existing funding (Discussion, Jim St Clair, Bruce MacNeil). With a negative political climate and extremely tight budgets from that period forward (the village was in danger of closing its doors on several occasions), the Gaelic program was allowed to languish. The Gaelic coordinator's term was cut back to ten weeks per year (during the high season only), and an active community outreach program abandoned. Efforts were made to free up the Gaelic coordinator for community-based work from time to time, but there was no longer a systematic approach to Gaelic programming and community outreach.

It was not until over a decade later, when the Highland Village was finally adopted into the Nova Scotia Museum family in 1999 after years of lobbying, that resources were found to revitalize the Gaelic program.

The Nova Scotia Museum identified Gaelic as the Highland Village's most distinctive and valuable asset and made a Gaelic development program a requirement for full museum status. The subsequent *Proposed Gaelic Program Objectives* drafted by the Highland Village in November 2000 outlined the following goals:

1. To re-create historical Gaelic life at the Highland Village;
2. To establish the Gaelic language as a working language of the village and an integral part of the interpretation of the site;
3. To have all staff, administrators and associates familiar with the history, culture and society of the Gael in Nova Scotia;
4. To enhance the role of the Highland Village in the interpretation of the Gaelic culture;
5. To develop the Highland Village as a resource for the Gaelic community's enrichment;
6. To establish the Highland Village as a cultural resource regionally, nationally and internationally;
7. To cooperate with Gaelic organizations within the province for the purpose of exchanging and sharing resources.

The Highland Village was setting out to fulfil a cultural development goal initially suggested in the 1950s, but not acted upon until the early 1980s and abandoned at that time due to tight budgets and a hostile political climate. The first objective of the new policy stated that: "The success of the Highland Village in achieving its original and long-standing purpose to represent the life and experiences of the Gael in Nova Scotia depends on the way the Highland Village presents the Gaelic language within a cultural context." (Nova Scotia Highland Village Society, *Proposed Gaelic Program Objectives*, November, 2000: 1) As had been discovered in the 1970s, however, a lack of institutional interest in the history of the Gaels in Nova Scotia made organizing such a representation difficult: "Much of this history, culture and information on social organization is not readily available in reference material that would be accessible to staff of the Highland Village or the public." (Nova Scotia Highland Village Society, 2000: 3)

In addition to improving its on-site representation of Gaelic culture, the Highland Village has identified community outreach as an important responsibility for the museum to undertake. This may well be one of the most significant outcomes for Gaelic culture and would stand to benefit not only the museum, but also the local Iona–Christmas Island district and Gaelic in the province of Nova Scotia as a whole.

> The Highland Village's mandate does not end at the doors of the Village. It extends to the Gaelic community that surrounds it. Consistent with many museums in Canada, the Highland Village sponsors outreach initiatives that include access to information, educational programming and information services.
>
> If local schools are to be successful in the re-introduction of Gaelic language and culture courses, the Highland Village will have to be aware of the needs and opportunities that these courses provide and be ready to supplement the classroom experience with a 'living history' experience. The Village has an outreach program, but it should be reviewed and, if necessary, expanded to respond to new opportunities in the Gaelic community. The goal of such a program should be to help to provide a Gaelic program for every major Gaelic community in Cape Breton, with the Highland Village be[ing] a leader but not the sole leader in achieving such a goal. A full time Extension/Outreach officer may be required to implement a coherent and cohesive program. (Nova Scotia Highland Village Society, 2000: 4)

An attempt by the Highland Village Museum to make meaningful use of the Gaelic language on site and to develop a core of materials that help adequately interpret the early history of the Gaels in Nova Scotia will undoubtedly make an important contribution to the Gaelic culture of the province. However, its proposed goal to develop a robust Gaelic outreach program, which responds to and complements local education initiatives and provides leadership in helping establish Gaelic programs throughout Gaelic Nova Scotia, is particularly exciting and would fill a void that has long existed in Gaelic development efforts — that of a committed coordinating agency with an understanding of the importance of local autonomy. It remains to be seen whether this far-reaching program will be carried through this time around, but the signs are very hopeful. If solid co-operative Gaelic cultural programs could be developed between St. Francis Xavier University, the Highland Village, the Gaelic College, and University College of Cape Breton, the impact on the declining rural *Gàidhealtachd* could be quite significant. It is hoped that these leading institutions will be able to develop some sort of framework for mutual support and co-operation, as this is traditionally a weakness in the Gaelic community.

Community Cultural Promotion: Feis an Eilein (The Christmas Island Gaelic Festival)

A wide variety of strategies have been employed to promote Gaelic culture at the community level. However, they tend to demonstrate many common features, including a heavy dependence on volunteers, an emphasis on human interaction, an emphasis on youth, and a decided lack of financial support and institutional integration. In the late 1980s, for example, *Croileagain* (Gaelic play schools) were started in the Iona district. Although the *Croileagain* movement in Scotland has been one of the more impressive Gaelic language development tools in recent decades, the movement in Nova Scotia was short lived and did not spread.

In the 1990s, a Gaelic summer camp entitled *EISD* (Educational Initiatives for Social Development), based on the Gaelic word "listen," was established in Inverness County, by schoolteacher Bernadette Campbell. The strategy of the camp was to introduce children to Gaelic culture through classes and interaction with tradition bearers. The camps proved quite popular with the children, but Campbell had to abandon the scheme due to difficulty in finding suitable venues and any sort of funding assistance. Campbell noted with frustration that the government support program representatives she met with were not especially supportive and had little understanding of what she was trying to achieve, often asking her why she was bothering to go to so much trouble.

More recently, a new youth group initiative was started in Iona by Gaeltalk Communications and the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum. Inspired by an article in *Am Bràighe*, an individual sponsored a summer apprenticeship for three young people in the area. The program, known as *Eilean nan Òg* (Island of Youth), quickly earned new sponsorship from other private donors and from the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society. Ten students were engaged in the latest program. The purpose of the initiative was to provide a paid learning experience for a small group of young people with a proven interest in Gaelic culture. Students were taught Gaelic language, history, and heritage on the museum's historical site. Gaelic classes were provided every morning and proved very popular, with students expressing a desire for more and, ultimately, for fluency in the language. Students were also introduced to local tradition bearers and exposed to Gaelic singing, storytelling, fiddling, piping, and step dancing as well as learning many of the traditional modes of survival in the pioneer setting where they were being instructed. The impact on the students appeared to have been profound, judging by their journals, and is ongoing. Last year's students have formed a Gaelic club at Rankin Memorial School, known as *Na h-Eileanaich* (The Islanders), to promote their interest in the language and culture. Initiatives such as this would seem to have great potential for further development.

It is impossible in this report to give a detailed account of all or even a representative sample of the types of community-sponsored Gaelic promotional schemes that go on in the province. Hopefully, readers will be able to get some sense of this overall activity by consulting the section on economic activity and the appendices. However, one community event, which has proved particularly durable and successful, will be briefly profiled to give at least some sense of the way communities tend to approach cultural development, the challenges they face along the way, and the opportunities that exist.

The *Feis* or Gaelic festival movement began in Scotland with *Feis Bharraigh* (The Barra Gaelic Festival), and it is an interesting coincidence that the first Gaelic festival in Nova Scotia should also begin in a Barra settlement — Christmas Island. Nova Scotia's first Gaelic festival — *Feis an Eilein* — sprung from a small informal Gaelic class conducted in Christmas Island by Hector MacNeil in the 1980s. A group of local people, who had been meeting on a regular basis for ceilidhs and conversation in Gaelic, determined that there must be a better way forward for Gaelic in their district. The nearby Highland Village Museum had begun to develop a potentially important Gaelic outreach program, which would include Gaelic classes in the surrounding community, but other than that there was no local institutional support for their language or their culture. The group decided to start lobbying to have Gaelic placed in the schools and in the interim hired Hector MacNeil and Jim Watson from their own small resources to teach children through the social studies program. Allison MacKenzie, who has been strongly involved with the *Feis* from its earliest days, recalled that the resolve of parents was galvanized when their children visited the district's former one room school and began singing the Gaelic songs they had been learning. The adult Gaelic advocates who had been studying Gaelic informally decided to commit themselves to a more extensive and structured program for local Gaelic development — *Feis an Eilein*.

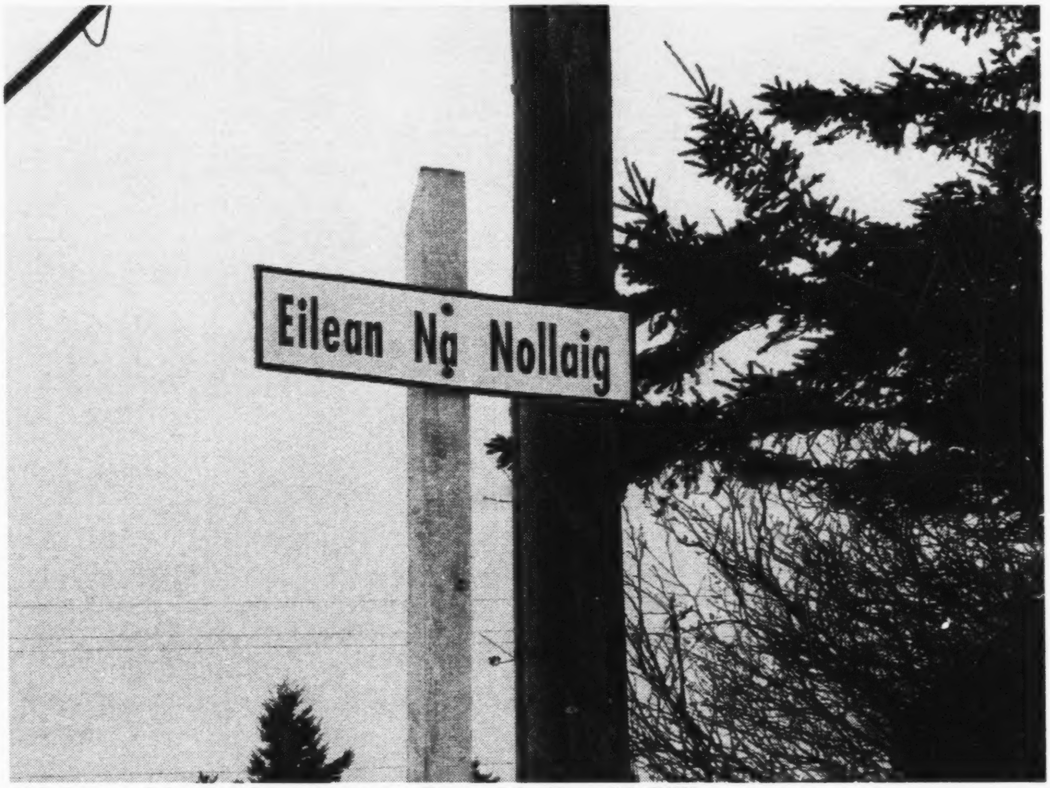
In 1991, with the encouragement of the Nova Scotia Gaelic Council, a steering committee drawn from Hector MacNeil's Gaelic class was organized to begin planning, and in 1993, a formal society was formed to organize the *Feis* at Christmas Island. The intention was to raise awareness of the district's rich Gaelic heritage and to educate children through interaction with older tradition bearers in the community. It was hoped that such interaction, particularly between the young and old, would not only help in the transmission of Gaelic culture but would also strengthen the bonds of affection and respect between young and old that had always been such an important feature of life in Gaelic Nova Scotia.

Organizers began with a three-day festival, which was designed to acquaint young people in the community with various aspects of their Gaelic cultural heritage, such as language, song, story, music, and dance. Christmas Island had been in the centre of one of the districts that had been most active in promoting various Gaelic endeavours throughout the 20th century, and there was strong support for this latest initiative. Organizers of *Feis Bharraigh* in Scotland also gave their support and good wishes and the BBC organized an on-air Gaelic conversation between one of the Barra organizers and Margaret Rose MacNeil of Christmas Island to celebrate the first *Feis* organized outside Scotland. The society expanded the *Feis* to ten days, which stretched its resources too thin, before settling on the five-day festival format it currently runs every August.

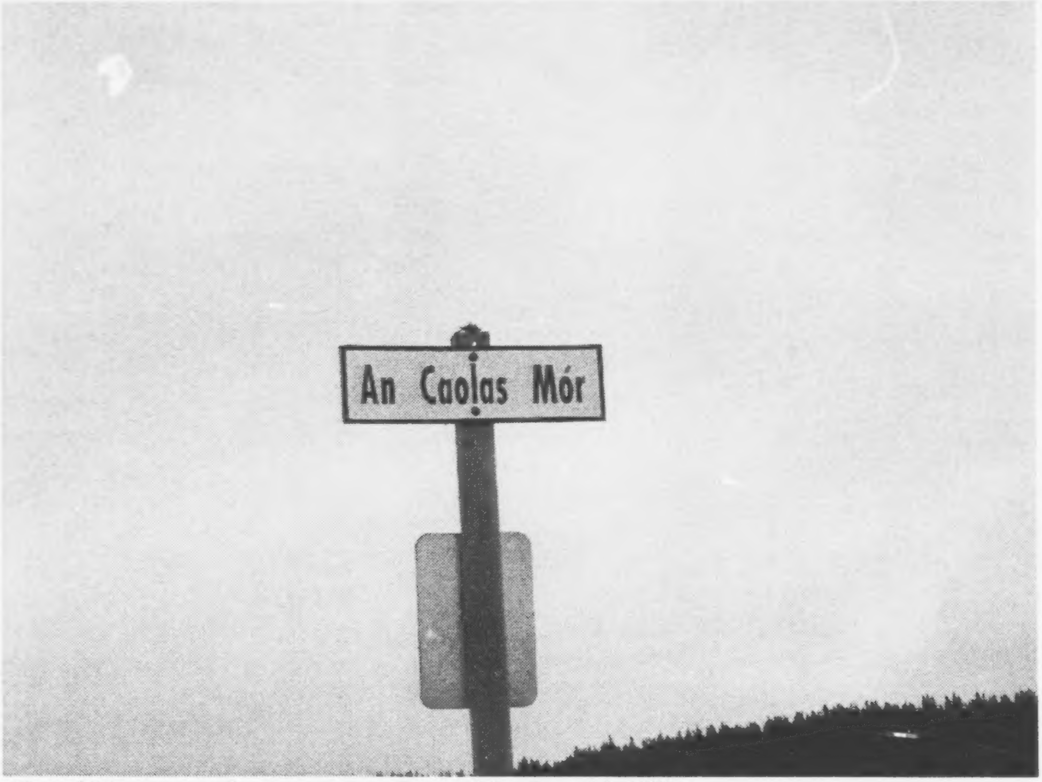
That summer, the communities of Mabou, Port Hood, Broad Cove, and Whycocomagh also developed their own *Feis*, but only Mabou followed through after the first year. The North Shore later organized its own *Feis*, but it has fallen into decline in the last years.

Only Christmas Island and Mabou continue to host an annual *Feis*. The two events follow a similar format, but the Christmas Island Feis is a more fundamental part of the community's Gaelic cultural strategy, while Mabou pursues a much more diversified approach to celebrating and perpetuating its Gaelic culture.

As part of their goal to raise awareness, the Christmas Island society raised $1,400 to manufacture Gaelic road signs for an area running roughly from Castle Bay to Boisdale. The signs used the Gaelic community names that had once been widely used in the district. This generated a lot of talk in the community and raised interest as had been hoped. The organizers were quick to point out that these were to be year-round signs raised not for tourists but for the community, to make a statement about who they were.



(Christmas Island: photo courtesy, Dawn MacDonald-Gillis)



(Grand Narrows: photo courtesy, Dawn MacDonald-Gillis)

The society was initially given permission to proceed with their Gaelic signage program by the Department of Transportation, but after the money was spent and the signs were made and installed, they were informed that the department had changed its mind and that the signs could not be allowed. When the department learned that they were already in place, they relented and gave permission for them to stay. However, the society was told that they would not be allowed to replace them. Theft, snowploughs, and the usual wear and tear have taken their toll on these attractive signs, unique in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Whether they will be replaced in the future remains very much in doubt, although the community still appears keen.

Another initiative the society sponsored was a six-week long summer music program in order to augment the courses given during the *Feis* itself. Student grants and a $500 provincial grant from the Workshop Assistance Program (Cultural Affairs) helped subsidize the costs of that program. Human Resources and Development Canada funding was also won, which enabled the society to devote some resources to archiving local Gaelic tradition. This has been largely restricted to recording the Gaelic activities during the *Feis* itself. In 1998, the society applied for a grant through the Nova Scotia Arts Council to put on a Gaelic Concert Series running for six to eight weeks during the summer. Their initial application received top priority from the Arts Council and $14,300 in funding out of a potential $15,000 maximum. This enabled Christmas Island to organize high-quality concerts in the Christmas Island Fire Hall, showcasing the best of

Nova Scotia's Gaelic song and music traditions, and even to bring in a young Gaelic-speaking organizer and master of ceremonies for the duration of the series. Gaeltalk Communications played an important role in organizing the concert program and in sharing material that had been recorded locally by Jim Watson.

Unfortunately, the society's subsequent applications for funding from the Nova Scotia Arts Council have been "supported but not funded," a category that clearly puzzles *Feis* organizers. Attempts to find funding for administration for the various activities the *Feis* sponsors — office costs, telephones, photocopying, advertising, and possibly funding for an administrator — were also unsuccessful. The society was told that the *Feis* did not qualify as a "professional arts society" and therefore was not eligible for the administrative funding support offered these groups by the Nova Scotia Arts Council. Since the *Feis* met all of the criteria that were specified by the representative who indicated that it was not eligible and since no other reasons for their rejection were given at the time, organizers openly wondered if their ineligibility had anything to do with the fact that they were a small rural community trying to promote their local culture rather than an urban-based organization, working with the more elite "arts." The concert series was continued for two more years, and corporate sponsorship was sought with some degree of success, but after two years of exhausting effort and too much uncertainty trying to scrape together the necessary funds to keep the concert series going, it has been decided to discontinue it.

The *Feis* currently acts not only as a program for rejuvenating culture in the local community but has been a potent tourism draw and has helped organizers develop useful professional skills. Some 25 volunteers are involved in putting on the *Feis*, and roughly 1,800 participants take part in the activities. Tourists not only find the opportunity to interact with the culture almost unique in North America, they also very much appreciate the interaction of young and old — a key part of the society's agenda.

The success of *Feis an Eilein* and the skills that have been developed have been helpful in encouraging others to develop their own Gaelic programs. Similar smaller festivals have been organized in the North Shore and in Mabou and other organizations from Glendale to Sydney and as diverse as Comunn Ghaidhlig Cheap Breatunn (The Cape Breton Gaelic Society) and Celtic Colours International Festival have approached *Feis an Eilein* organizers for assistance, which has been freely given.

In many ways, the *Feis* movement is in its infancy in Cape Breton, but in areas such as Christmas Island, where it has the most established history, the results have already been promising. The *Feis* seems to present considerable potential for effective, local Gaelic development. The culture is given high profile, raising awareness and confidence locally, and cultural and organizational skills are nurtured from within the community. The *Feis* also appears to have strong tourism appeal but is currently fairly poorly advertised by the various tourism support networks.

More secure funding sources, particularly for administration, and better coordination from professional tourism organizations in advertising these specific events and these areas as unique cultural zones could have significant returns. Coordination of *Feis an Eilein* activities and objectives in Christmas Island with the improved Gaelic programming at the Highland Village and with the burgeoning Gaelic curriculum at Rankin Memorial School, both in nearby Iona, could create positive synergies and help build a stronger Gaelic infrastructural foundation in the area. Such development would be a positive model for other communities to consider.

SECTION FOUR: THE GAELIC ECONOMY

Gaelic generates over $23.5 million annually in *direct* revenue, not including multipliers. The statement is qualified, because a study as broad in scope as this one can hope to make only a very crude estimation of the Gaelic economic activity in the province. The Gaelic economy is diverse, not always easy to distinguish, disparate, informally organized, and poorly documented, all of which makes assessment particularly difficult. That the figure quoted is *direct* revenue is also emphasized, as no attempt has been made to calculate the much larger overall multiplier effect of Gaelic economic activity, although a brief reference will be made to it in what follows.

It should also be noted that only activities in which Gaelic featured significantly have been counted. Millions of dollars are generated by attractions such as the Halifax Citadel, the Nova Scotia Tattoo, and the "Kitchen Ceilidh" Caribbean Cruises, all of which feature Gaelic as a part of their overall offering but not in a significant enough manner to merit inclusion here. The East Coast Music Awards should also be mentioned. Although there seems to be something of a movement away from "Celtic" music at the ECMAs at the moment, Gaelic music played a key role in getting the whole event on its feet. The event currently generates from $3 to 5 million annually for the host city and draws a television audience of approximately 700,000 viewers. Last year, 300 accredited media attended the event in Charlottetown, including representatives from the United States and Europe (Correspondence: Steve Horne, East Coast Music Association, April 2001). There is clearly an important Gaelic element in that activity, but time and resources did not allow for sufficient analysis to reliably detail its contribution. Gaelic economic activity, for the purpose of this report, has been defined as any activity in which Gaelic language or culture feature substantially. Gaelic "events," for instance, featured from about 25 per cent to 100 per cent Gaelic content but on average more than 80 per cent, while the other categories were almost exclusively concerned with Gaelic cultural content. Several broad categories of activity were identified — events ($2.7 million), lessons ($1.3 million), products ($4.7 million), recording ($43,000), and touring ($14.8 million).

Events

Survey of Events

The first category, "events," dealt with what could be described as entertainment activities — concerts and dances, primarily, but also a wide variety of other activities involving an active presentation of the language and/or culture for an audience. Research assistants canvassed events by telephone in four major districts:

- Eastern Cape Breton
- Western Cape Breton
- Antigonish and Pictou counties
- Halifax and mainland Nova Scotia

Events organizers were asked to provide the following information:

- Type of event
- Gaelic language content
- Gaelic cultural content
- Average audience size
- Number of tradition bearers/performers
- Number of support staff
- Purpose of event (fund-raiser, commercial, entertainment, promote culture, etc.)
- Season
- Frequency of event
- Admission
- Other revenue
- Average audience size

The canvassing proved highly successful, with 275 specific activities identified, representing 2,070 events annually. Information was generously shared, in the vast majority of instances (where available), with commercial organizations being least willing to reveal financial data. Gaps in the data were plugged by best estimates, based on the lead researcher's local knowledge and extrapolation from other similar events. The category with the poorest response rate was "Other Revenue." To estimate returns here, a conservative formula was devised. An estimate of $1 per person was made for events that featured a canteen; an estimate of $3 per person was made for events featuring canteen sales and/or merchandise sales; and an estimate of $5 per person was made for pubs or bars where alcohol was served. Cross-referenced against events where such data were available, the results suggest that the estimations somewhat under-represent this level of economic activity.

Revenue

The amount of revenue generated annually by the 2,070 various Gaelic events in Nova Scotia is conservatively estimated at $2.7 million, of which $1.7 million is raised by commercial venues and $1 million by community organizations, which plough their profits back into the community. Nearly 380,000 people attend Gaelic events each year, and close to 30,000 are involved in putting the events on. The latter number, of course, does not represent 30,000 different people, as many tradition bearers and support workers make frequent appearances at many different events over the course of the year. To put it another way, this represents about 90,000 paid and (mostly) volunteer hours per year using a very conservative estimate of the amount of time volunteers give to each event. At a minimum wage salary, this comes to a value of $522,000 per annum. However, the number does not effectively communicate just how much is being demanded from what are relatively small numbers of people, most of whom are volunteers.

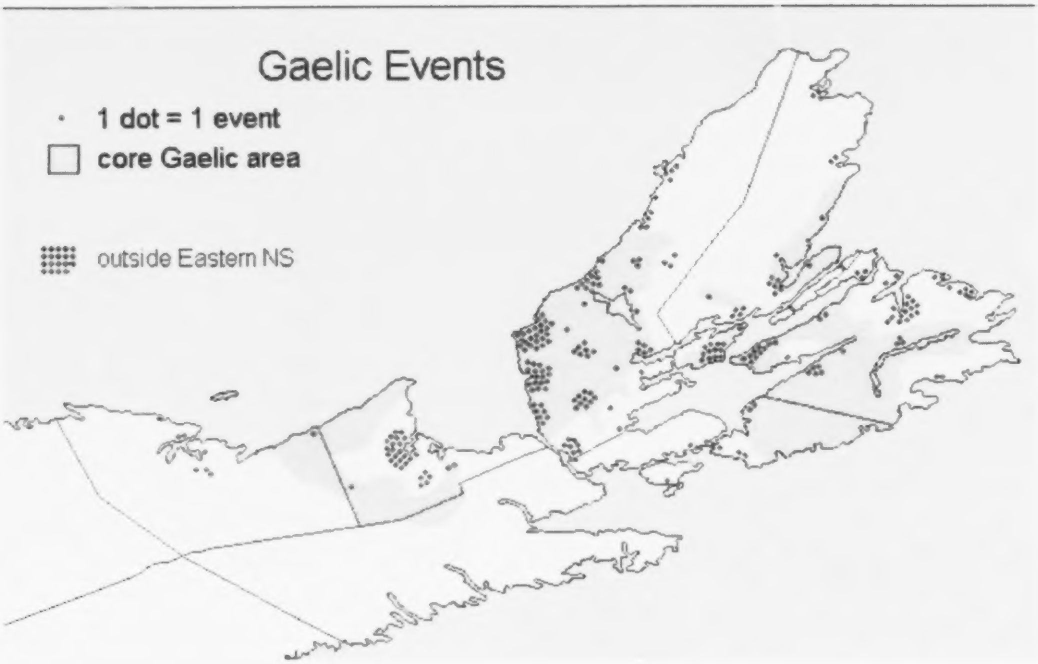
	Number of Events	Tradition bearers	Support Staff	Audience	Revenue
Commercial	1,100	4,610	5,751	154,155	1,589,452
Community	970	10,011	10,299	223,179	1,074,326
Total	2,070	14,621	16,050	377,334	2,663,778

The Nature of the Events

On average, the 275 events had 80 per cent Gaelic cultural content and 17 per cent Gaelic language content. Concerts were the most popular activity, making up 67 per cent of the total, followed by dances at 17 per cent, workshops and lectures at six per cent, a series of other events under one per cent each. Attendance at various events ranged in size from a handful to several thousand, but for the most part, events were small scale, with an average attendance of just under 200. This seems to correspond with the size of venues generally available.

The distribution of Gaelic events shows a fairly strong correlation with the core areas of Gaelic linguistic strength in the province. Although one might expect that urban areas with larger populations and better performance venues would dominate the figures, this was not the case. They were somewhat better represented in the hosting of events than in the categories of tradition bearers, which have been provided earlier in the report but were not nearly as strong as their rural counterparts, which showed the same disproportionate strength in organizing events as they did in other areas of the culture.

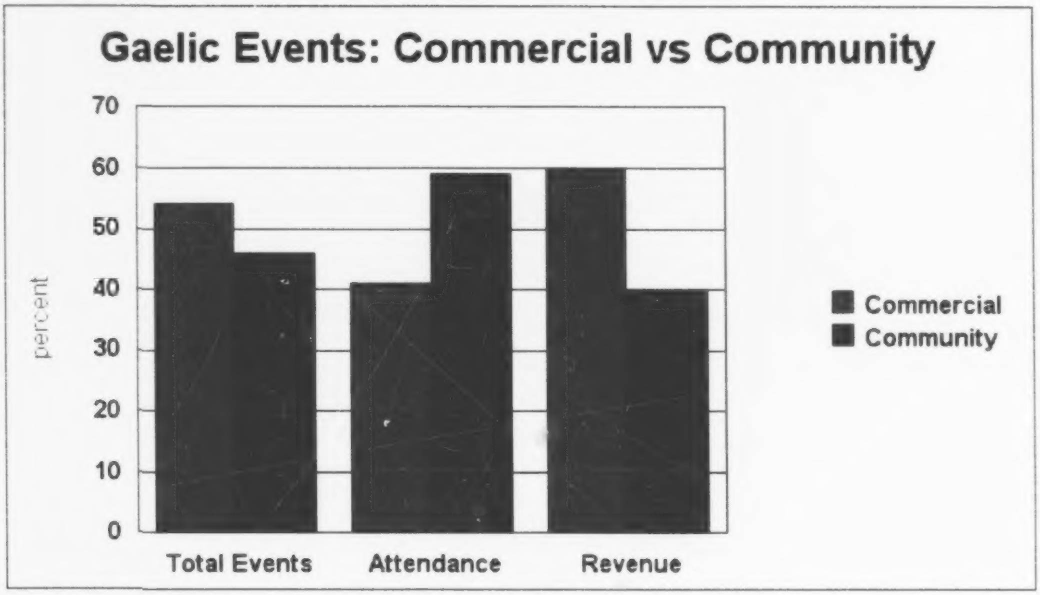
Again, there was a strong correlation between the areas of greatest Gaelic strength over the last century *and* with religious affiliation. The latter is easily explained by the fact that the vast majority of the Gaelic events featured music or dance — traditions much more highly developed in Catholic areas. Protestant regions have not yet rebounded from generations of religious censure of those arts. Notable areas of strength are Inverness County, particularly from Mabou to Creignish and also the Iona–Christmas Island district. Antigonish town is much better represented in this category than in the categories of tradition bearers, and it would seem that St. Francis Xavier University is partly responsible.



As might be expected from the distribution of events, there was a strong community focus. Nearly half of the 2,070 events were non-commercial, with all the profits raised being devoted to some community cause, such as a local charity, the community hall, the church, the rink, athletics, and so on. In fact, of these types of events, 60 per cent identified "fund-raising" as the primary reason for holding the event. They clearly play a very important role in supporting the local community infrastructure. A strong volunteer network is also critical to the functioning of these events.

Another notable feature of the community events (as opposed to commercial events) is the relatively high number that identified the promotion of Gaelic culture as their primary goal, 17 per cent. This was higher than "entertainment," the third most common category at 13 per cent. It goes without saying that there was considerable overlap across categories. All events raised money for local causes, all were clearly popular forms of entertainment, and a great many of the events organizers demonstrated a keen sense of responsibility for supporting and promoting the culture. That this was sincere is evident from discussion with many of the organizers who clearly think deeply about the subject. However, there is one slightly worrying point that arises. Although 60 per cent of the events were fund-raisers, only three per cent of these were raising money specifically for the support of Gaelic culture.

A breakdown of the Gaelic events by "commercial" or "community" orientation gives the following results. There are slightly more commercial events held annually, but their attendance is significantly lower than that of the community events. At the same time, they generate significantly more revenue.

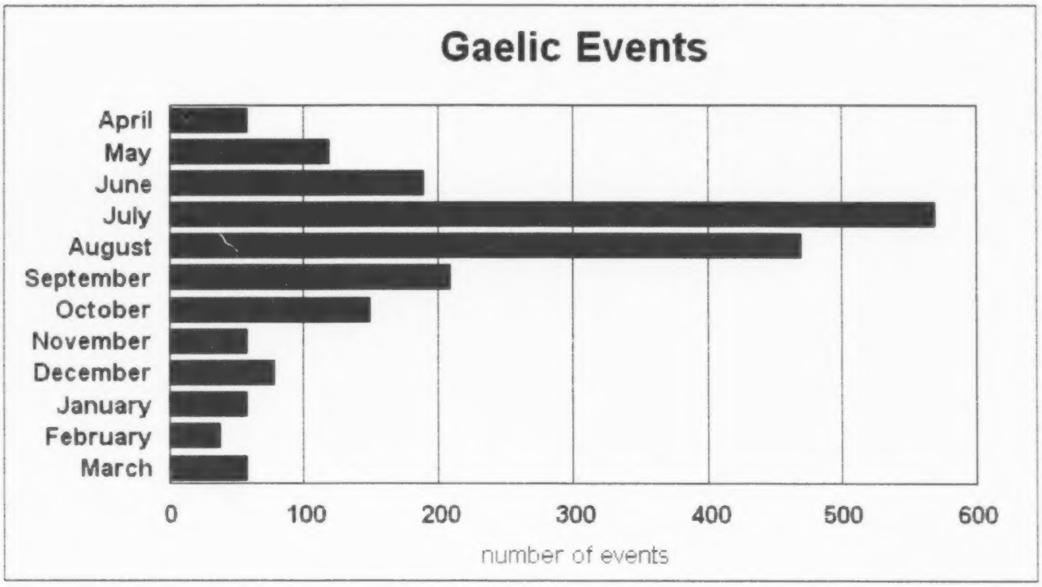


Part of the reason that community events appear more popular than commercial events might be the nature of the activities themselves — summer homecoming or parish concerts draw the largest crowds of all the various events, sometimes into the thousands and may be sufficient to skew the figures somewhat. They might also attract larger numbers, because they offer better value for money. Community events provide greater numbers of entertainers per event (10 versus 4) and charge significantly less per event ($5 versus $11). They are also more likely to offer children-friendly environments.

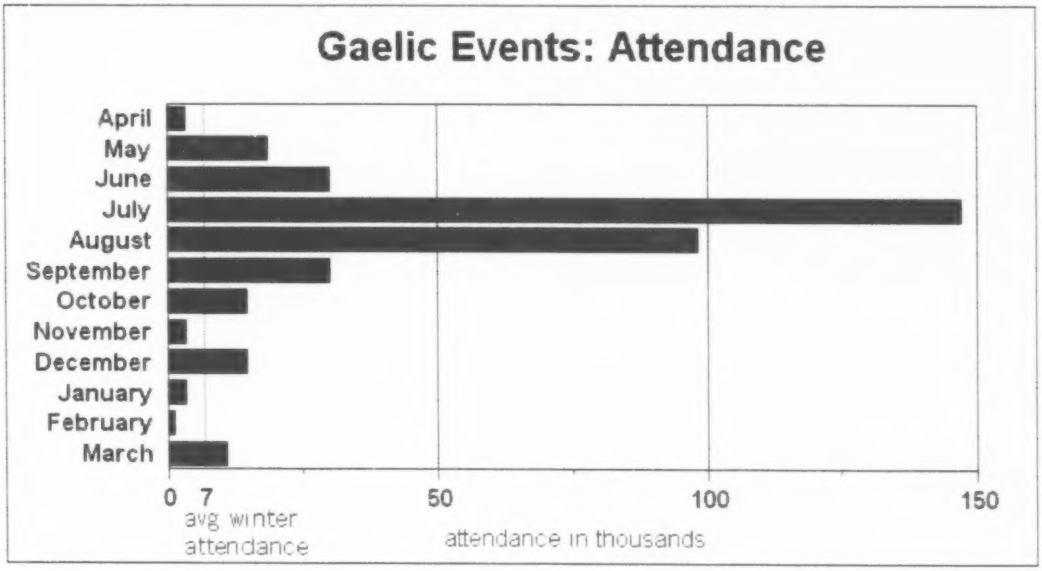
	Tradition bearers	Support Staff	Audience	Revenue	Admission
Commercial	4	5	140	1476	11
Community	10	11	236	1131	5
Average	7	8	185	1316	7

Season

Gaelic events demonstrate a marked seasonal clustering. With the return of good weather in May, the number of events taking place begins to rise sharply, more than doubling from April to May and nearly doubling again from May to June before nearly tripling in July, the peak month of the year for Gaelic events. From August an equally dramatic drop is noticed.



While the increase in the number of events taking place might suggest a correlation between increased ease of travel and more outdoor activity, with better summer weather encouraging heavier local participation, the attendance figures also suggest that increasing activity is very tightly tied to tourist visits and a large increase in the population during the summer months, as the attendance figures show an even more marked seasonal clustering. The average winter (November–April) attendance at events is just over 7,000 per month as compared to an average of over 55,000 per month over the summer season (May–October). Only just over 40,000 people attend events from November to April, while nearly 340,000 attend from May to October.



The Department of Tourism and Culture calculates that cultural tourists make only six per cent of their expenditures on "events" and 94 per cent on other costs such as accommodation, food, gas, and so on, meaning that the $2.7 million in revenue reported represents a substantial underestimate of the ultimate economic contribution made by the 340,000 people who attend Gaelic events annually. Calculating a multiplier effect for these substantial numbers is difficult without more detail on the nature of the audience composition. Festivals such as Celtic Colours seem to apply the Department of Tourism's basic formula straight to their revenue figures without eliminating local participants. This would appear in the case of the Gaelic events to represent something of an overestimate, since it is not likely that even the 300,000 more people who attend events in the summer season are all visitors to the province.

In a 1996 study by ARA Consulting Group for the Department of Tourism, it was estimated that 18 per cent of the 220,000 people who attended major festivals in Nova Scotia that summer were visitors to the province. Applying the same factor to the 300,000 people who similarly attended Gaelic events last summer, would suggest just over 54,000 out-of-province visitors, accounting for approximately $430,000 in revenue. Applying the Department of Tourism and Culture's multiplier factor to *this* number gives a figure of nearly $11.7 million in new revenue to the province over and above the $2.7 million generated directly by the events. However, applying the Department of Tourism's formula of direct spending on events (six per cent) vs. multiplier spending (94 per cent), as Celtic Colours seems to do, would suggest a multiplier effect of $73.4 million. Combined with the revenue from the events themselves, this would amount to $76.1 million in economic activity from Gaelic events in the province, of which, nearly $12 million would be new revenue brought to the province by visitors. While likely something of an overestimate, this highlights how conservative the estimate of $23.5 million is for total Gaelic economic activity in Nova Scotia.

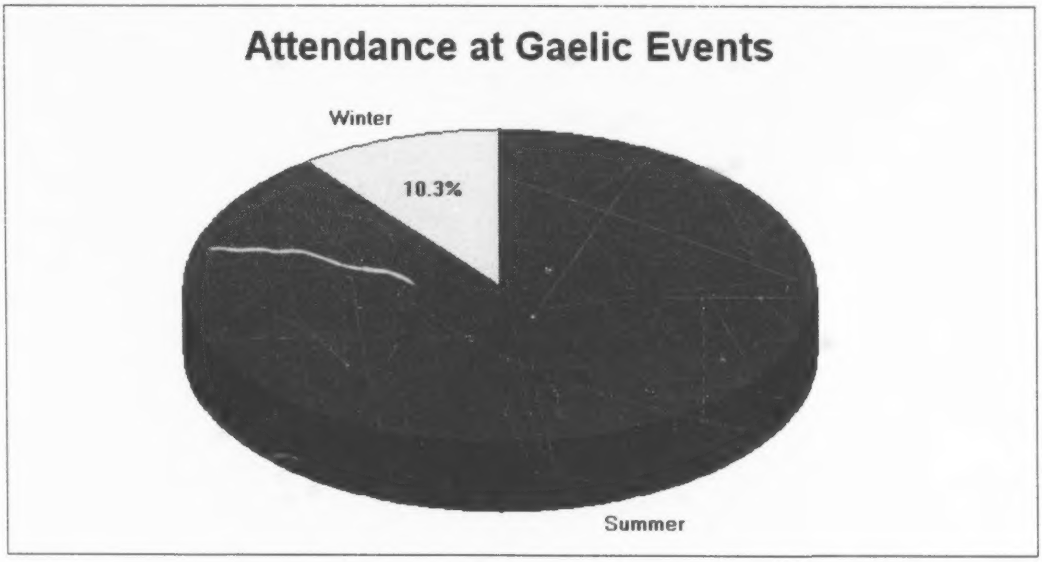
Increasing Revenue

Surveying the economic data, it is clear that more revenue can be generated by increased tourist participation in Gaelic events. The simplest way to do this would be to increase the average cost of admission. The prices currently charged seem well below what most tourists to the region would be accustomed to, especially for the quality of entertainment provided. However, nearly half of the community events are community oriented, and their fee structure is designed to accommodate a local population. Increasing the cost of admission will probably lead to a decline in the number of local people attending. They are the most important supporters of these events and alienating them for the sake of short-term profiteering in the summer would be self-defeating. Secondly, a considerable amount of the tourist appeal in some events, such as square dancing, is dependent on strong local participation. Declining numbers of local participants in events such as these undermines their cultural validity and ultimately, their tourist appeal. Finally, many of the organizers are strongly committed not only to their communities but to the culture and see accessibility as a major issue. Raising prices makes Gaelic events less accessible, especially to families and children — the very people many organizers wish to encourage.

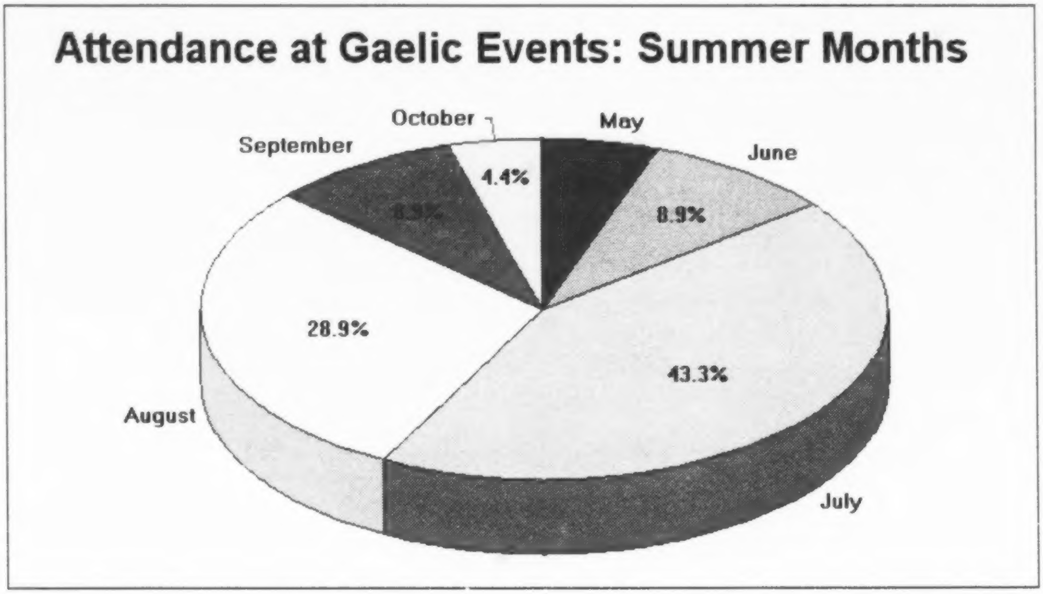
Commercial events are not bound by any such considerations but must remain competitive with community events, and so a significant rise in the price of admission would not seem wise there either.

Because these community events provide such good value for money, however, and because they are committed to raising funds for the culture and for the community, rather than for private profit, organizers of some events might consider placing donation boxes at the doors of their events, explaining the nature of their fund-raising activities. Even a small percentage of donations from the dramatically increased number of visitors over the summer could provide a significant increase in annual revenue.

A second simple way to increase revenue without disrupting the present fee schedule is to increase the number of paying participants. This presents several interesting challenges. The first is simply that there is not the capacity to accommodate more tourists in the currently structured tourism season. In July and August, most of the events venues do not have the capacity to take advantage of the increased tourist traffic. The average attendance at community events is currently 235 per event, and for many of the venues that is already a maximum. Additionally, in some interactive events such as square dancing, a certain critical mass of locals is absolutely essential to prevent chaos. Both for locals and tourists it is important that the numbers of summer visitors do not overwhelm the regular participants in cultural activities. Expansion of facilities would be one possible solution, but apart from the cost and the significant risk that would be taken on, as the chart below indicates, the drop-off in attendance from summer to winter is so dramatic that it would be unsafe, in most instances, to increase the capacity of local facilities, which would then operate at a tiny fraction of their capacity for the rest of the year.

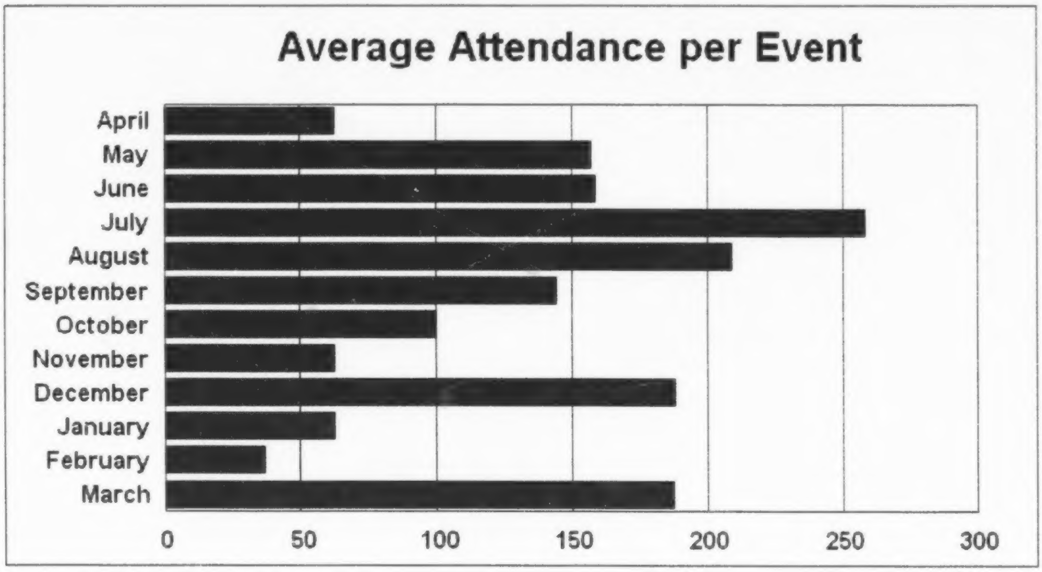


When the season is broken down in more detail, it can be seen that the principal challenge is the extraordinary clustering of events in July and August. Nearly three-quarters of the attendance is accounted for by two months, with July accounting for nearly half the year's total. This state of affairs makes it very difficult for events organizers to maximize their revenue. Operating below capacity for most of the year (the West Mabou dance, cited in an earlier section is a particularly good example of this), venues are then forced to contend with a frenzy of activity in July and August, which often stretches them well beyond their limits. Clearly expansion of the season would be a useful goal.



Weather and school holidays place something of a brake on development of the shoulder seasons in Nova Scotia. However, many of the high-end cultural tourists that Nova Scotia would like to attract are retired couples for whom school schedules are irrelevant. The weather in the shoulder season is often quite pleasant in Nova Scotia, particularly in June and September. Celtic Colours has achieved some success with its Celtic festival in the middle of October during the peak of the fall colours. According to figures supplied by Rave Entertainment which organizes the festival, Celtic Colours attracted a total of 9,937 people to 35 performances in 30 different venues spread across Cape Breton. The majority of the audience was from Cape Breton (53 per cent) followed by mainland Nova Scotia (16 per cent). Less than a third of the audience were visitors to the province. Rave estimates that their total income was $626,000, an operating loss of $38,000, but that they generated $4.8 million in revenue through multipliers.

Weather conditions in June and September are generally pleasant (although not as reliable as July and August and not generally as picturesque as early October) and might be suitable for development. Average attendance at events in May and June is actually quite high — nearly triple that of the off-season and higher than October, even with the activity around Celtic Colours, suggesting that more people are coming out to events at those times but that perhaps the number of events is not as numerous as the demand might be capable of sustaining. Certainly, the fact that so many of the tourist facilities that provide accommodation and meals do not open until the Canada Day weekend (July 1) is a discouragement to increased visitation in May and June. High attendance rates (per event) in December and March also demonstrate that it is possible to draw larger crowds in the off-season if properly targeted, suggesting some room for development in the off season, if done carefully. Charity organizers currently make use of March, for instance, for large fund-raising events, when there is less competition from other activities.



Gaelic events are not the most significant contributor to the economy from the Gaelic sphere in terms of direct revenue, but they are without a doubt the most important in overall impact. The multiplier effect means that the bare "revenue generated" figures presented here massively underestimate the overall economic contribution. Moreover, the wide dispersion of these events, particularly throughout small rural communities within the former *Gàidhealtachd*, means that the benefits are going directly to the communities who have preserved the culture that is being presented. There are no mediators. However, at the moment it seems likely that these communities are missing out on a significant amount of the money that their culture is generating.

Most of the Gaelic communities are poorly served by tourism infrastructure. Few of the large hotels, restaurants, and such are located in the rural *Gàidhealtachd*. Route 19, up the west coast of Inverness County, has comparatively little tourism infrastructure in spite of being one of the most active producers of Gaelic cultural activity. The same is generally true of Route 223, running through Iona and Christmas Island. This means that much of the potent multiplier effect is lost to these communities. Instead, visitors spend the lion's share of their money in places like Baddeck, Port Hawkesbury, Inverness, Cheticamp, and Sydney where there are better facilities (though the quality and quantity vary quite widely even among these centres) and make small day trips out to take advantage of the Gaelic events in the smaller rural areas.

It also seems the case, at the moment, that tourist flow is directed away from the areas of greatest Gaelic cultural activity. Provincial traffic flow charts show that there is a massive (and not surprising) bias to the Trans Canada highway, running through the centre of Cape Breton to North Sydney. In the northern part of Cape Breton, there is heavy tourist flow from the Trans Canada to very specific routes — west to the Cabot Trail and east to Fortress Louisbourg. In fact, the Alexander Graham Bell Museum, the Cabot Trail, and Fortress Louisbourg are the most important tourist draws in eastern Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, the overall traffic flow, and the location of these important tourist sites largely encourages tourist to bypass the most active Gaelic cultural areas, such as Route 19 (west coast) and Route 233 (central Cape Breton and Bras d' Or Lakes). One exception to this is the Gaelic College and the St. Ann's–North Shore Gaelic region, which is located at the start of the Cabot Trail. However, most of the better service facilities are in Baddeck, and there is no longer a great deal of Gaelic cultural activity (concerts and dances, for instance) in the St. Ann's–North Shore community, in which tourists could participate, if they wished. If Gaelic culture is to benefit as much as possible from tourism revenue, more effort will have to be made to address this problem.

Lessons

Lessons in the Gaelic language and the Gaelic arts contribute $1.3 million in revenue to the economy annually. Some 135 institutions and individuals teach 1,959 students throughout the province. Fiddle is the most popular course (26 per cent) followed closely by step dancing (25 per cent) and Gaelic (22 per cent), with bagpipes (ten per cent) and piano (three per cent) rounding out the numbers of the more important categories. Most of the courses are taught privately by individuals rather than institutions, and the fees are generally quite low.

The enumeration of nearly 400 adult learners in Gaelic outside the public schools system, in light of the poor provision of courses and materials, suggests considerable potential for expansion. Courses in Gaelic are taught at institutions such as St. Francis Xavier University, Saint Mary's University, University College of Cape Breton, and the Gaelic College (and also in the public schools again but those figures are not represented here as revenue-generating activity). Most of the instructors in Gaelic and the other cultural arts are not professionals employed by institutions but teach informally and most of the students appear to be resident in the province year-round, so the multiplier effect of their activity is minimal. The universities, the Gaelic College, and the Ceilidh Trail School of Music do, however, draw students to Nova Scotia from across North America. The multiplier effect is not known but is likely very substantial, since these programs generally require a period of residency ranging from days to weeks to months. Considering that Gaelic language and cultural art forms are being actively studied across North America, it seems possible that investment in developing expertise in these areas of instruction with provincially recognized standards, particularly with regard to language instruction (and as advocated by the Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia), could also encourage increased high-end visitation to the province. This might also represent a potential for off-season, or at least off-peak, development.

Products

Gaelic products generate $4.7 million in revenue annually. The great bulk of that (88 per cent) is accounted for by a very lively market in Cape Breton recorded music. There are close to a hundred CDs on the market at the moment, some of which are intended mostly for local consumption, selling in the hundreds and in the thousands, and others that sell in thousands and tens of thousands on the international market.

Books and magazines account for five per cent of total sales and appear to be largely for the domestic market. Books range from Gaelic learners manuals to Gaelic song, to local history and genealogy to collections of Cape Breton fiddle music, and pipe music and historical accounts of the Gaelic arts in Nova Scotia. Sìol Cultural Enterprises is the main supplier of Gaelic and Gaelic-related publications. Sìol Cultural Enterprises supplies almost every Gaelic book sold in Nova Scotia. They are the official NA representatives for Acair, Gairm Publishing, and Canan Trading Group, the chief Gaelic publishers in Scotland. Approximately 40 per cent of their sales last year were exported to the rest of Canada and the United States (chiefly New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Calgary, Oklahoma, Colorado, California, and the Eastern United States. Approximately 75 per cent of sales are Gaelic language books, most of the remaining are instructional videos and cassettes, with a growing number of music CDs. Magazines such as *Am Bràighe* and *Celtic Heritage* specialize in Nova Scotia's Gaelic heritage. As the names might suggest, *Am Bràighe* out of Cape Breton has more of a Gaelic focus and includes more material in the Gaelic language. It also focuses more on Nova Scotian culture, while *Celtic Heritage* has a broader "Celtic" scope, including articles on Scotland and Ireland. Other magazines, such as *Cape Breton's Magazine*, feature occasional Gaelic content, sometimes of very high quality.

Video sales also account for five per cent of the revenue generated by Gaelic product sales, and those include instructional videos for step dancing, fiddling, and piano accompaniment and videos featuring Cape Breton music. SeaBright Murphy Videos out of Antigonish is the most active local producer of these materials.

While the sales of Gaelic products are healthy, many of the products are surprisingly difficult to come by in various parts of the province. They are not as well represented in many of the shops as might be expected. The volume and diversity of the recorded music makes carrying an exhaustive representation of even the current Cape Breton fiddling CDs available difficult for most small operators. Making these products more readily available at local retailers, allied with better advertising of these products and perhaps more creative use of Internet sales, would undoubtedly result in increased sales and provide tourists with good quality materials unique to Nova Scotia.

Recording

Despite Nova Scotia's strong sales of local CDs, local recording and production seems under-represented. Only $43,000 worth of business was noted by researcher Tracey Dares-MacNeil in this sphere. Although this is likely an underestimate of the amount of Gaelic product coming through the local recording studios, it does seem to be the case that revenue is being lost in this area, which might conceivably be kept in Nova Scotia. At the moment, higher-quality CDs are usually taken out of province for final mastering, which represents a significant loss of revenue to local studios. The number of small studios in Cape Breton, however, does suggest that the strength of the Gaelic music scene has been helpful in developing a small but important industry. The correlation between the location of these studios and particularly active Gaelic culture and music areas is not good.

Touring

Touring musicians account for nearly 50 per cent of the direct revenue generated by Gaelic in Nova Scotia — $14.8 million annually. This is likely a conservative estimate as only the larger touring operations were considered. A great many Cape Breton musicians who do not "tour" do play gigs outside the province from time to time, and cumulatively, their numbers can be quite significant (Cape Breton musicians playing inside the province were enumerated under "events" and are not recounted here). However, it was not possible to get accurate figures for this smaller-scale activity in the short time available, and it was not possible to reliably extrapolate from the experience of the larger-scale touring acts. Having said that, the artists making the largest economic contribution have been considered.

A second problem with the touring musicians is in estimating how much of that $14.8 million returns to Nova Scotia. Large touring operations are expensive to operate and do provide large knock-on benefits in terms of downstream employment and expenditure but it is likely that only a small portion of that total revenue gets back to the province. However, the income is likely still significant, and the province does benefit in less direct ways. The nine larger touring acts that were considered average 150 shows a year, with average audience sizes of 700 (the average range being roughly 250–1,200). That represents more than 1,400 shows a year and a total audience of nearly one million. This, too, is something of an underestimate, as the average audience size does not take account events such as folk festivals where audiences may number in the tens of thousands. Additionally, many musicians do extensive media work. Mary Jane Lamond, for instance, does an average of 20 television appearances a year besides numerous radio appearances on everything from Much Music to the BBC to the Public Broadcasting System.

Because of the fact that they perform a distinctive music rooted in a culture that is itself strongly rooted in Nova Scotia, these musicians and singers advertise the province every time they perform, whether they want to or not, and it is quite clear that most are very keen to promote their home whenever possible. Natalie MacMaster routinely tells listeners and viewers where she is from and what the area is like and encourages them to visit. Mary Jane Lamond informs her audiences about Gaelic culture and its roots in Nova Scotia and similarly encourages them to come see it first hand. She indicated in an interview for this report that less than half of the people she meets while touring in the United States are familiar with Nova Scotia. In fact, a larger number seem to be aware of Gaelic culture generally. She does her best to enlighten them and to encourage their interest in Nova Scotia's Gaelic heritage.

How many people hear these messages each year through live concerts, television, radio, print interviews, and the like is impossible to determine, but the number is enormous. Nearly one million people see these musicians perform live every year. That represents a substantial value to the province in advertising. Promotional expenses for more than 1,400 shows a year would likely run in excess of $2.8 million alone — money that the Department of Tourism and Culture does not have to spend promoting Nova Scotia since it is being done for them. Considering the enthusiasm Gaelic musicians have for advertising the province as a destination for visitors to come to sample the culture first hand, the Department of Tourism and Culture might consider product bundling to supplement their efforts, particularly if the advertising has well thought-out Gaelic content. Having high-quality tourism material on hand at some of these many shows would be an effective and cost-effective way to reach a very wide audience.

SECTION FIVE: LOOKING AHEAD

The purpose of this report is to bring sufficient information together to provide a good overview of Gaelic Nova Scotia — its past history, its resources, and the challenges and opportunities that lie before it. It is intended to be the first step in a process leading to community consultation and, eventually, the formulation of a heritage policy for Gaelic in the province. For this reason, it is not mandated to make policy recommendations. However, in this last section of the report an attempt will be made to highlight some of the major points of concern and to suggest possible ways forward in the form of a SWOT analysis.

Strengths of Gaelic Nova Scotia

- Unique survival of Gaelic/Celtic culture in North America
- Attractive and accessible music and dance culture
- Hospitable, welcoming culture
- Strong local involvement in cultural events
- Good distribution of culture
- Potent contributor to the economy

Unique Survival of Gaelic Culture in North America

Nova Scotia is home to the last Gaelic-speaking communities in the New World. The nature of the migrations from Scotland ensured that large, nearly homogeneous communities were established here, dominating nearly a third of the province's area. Within that richly Gaelic environment developed a truly Canadian and North American Gaelic community that is now unique in the world. Generations of undiluted cultural transmission went hand in hand with generations of adaptation and creativity in the New World environment.

The Gaelic language and its associated traditions were strongly perpetuated into the 20th century. Literature flourished and a lively tradition of composition and publication brought both new and classic works to a wide audience. Much of this material remains in circulation and is still accessible. Today, the main vehicle for the transmission of this cultural art is through communal song — the most popular form of which, the milling frolic, also offers visitors not only a chance to see and hear a wonderful cultural art form but also to take active part by joining in at the milling table and singing choruses.

In addition to its unique place in the New World context, Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture has also been recognized for strongly maintaining and continuing to develop dynamic traditions that have since faded in Gaelic Scotland. Perhaps most noteworthy are its fiddling and step dancing traditions, which are now being reintroduced to Scotland by Cape Breton tradition bearers.

The very existence of this language and culture and its strong tradition of song, music, and dance, not to mention the potent mix of new and ancient material, is often quite striking for visitors who are used to more disposable, less integrated forms of pop culture in mainstream society.

Attractive and Accessible Music and Dance Culture

Gaels have long been noted for their love of music and dancing, and they brought this affection with them to the new world. Gaels were immigrating to Nova Scotia during the golden age of Scottish fiddling and at a time when piping was still a robust folk art, so the initial musical environment that was established in the province was particularly rich and vibrant. Unlike Scotland, Nova Scotia was spared many of the pressures that would erode such forms of Gaelic cultural expression in the 19th century, such as the actions of "improvers."

In its new Nova Scotian environment, music flourished, showing the same strong continuity, adaptation, and creativity as the Gaelic language arts. Noted musicians passed on an enormous legacy of tunes, many of which fell out of use in Scotland, and composers began a new legacy of creating purely Canadian Gaelic music. Fiddlers began recording the Nova Scotian Gaelic musical tradition as early as the 1930s, and today there is a prodigious output of traditional music recordings by old and young exponents of the art. Fiddlers are the mainstay of local concerts and dances and are also active on tour throughout Canada and internationally. Some have been invited back to Scotland as instructors to help reintroduce the traditional Gaelic style of playing. In recent years, Cape Breton's fiddling and step dancing traditions have achieved international recognition and have played a significant role in launching high profile events such as the East Coast Music Awards, which generate millions of dollars in revenue and garner enormous media coverage.

Visiting fiddlers have noted that Cape Breton has one of the strongest fiddling traditions that they have encountered anywhere. Other visitors have expressed surprise at how accessible these musicians are in Nova Scotia, as many have only been able to see them in large concerts elsewhere and as some of these musicians are considered by visitors to be quite "famous." In the informal community concert and dance environment of Gaelic Nova Scotia, however, visitors can not only enjoy hours of music at an exceptionally reasonable price from some of the best traditional musicians in the world but can easily interact with them. There are also increasing opportunities for instruction in Cape Breton fiddling.

Tightly linked to the robust music tradition is an equally robust dance tradition. In the late 1980s some 600 stepdancers were enumerated in Nova Scotia. This tradition has disappeared from Scotland and is being reintroduced by exponents of the art from Nova Scotia. Square dancing, in which both step dancing and traditional music are prominent, is a lively and popular pastime throughout Cape Breton and, to a lesser extent, other parts of the province and is easily accessible for tourists. They can participate passively, taking in the sights and the music, or actively as dancers. In any given year, dance enthusiasts have their choice of roughly 200 different dances. There are also classes in Cape Breton step dancing given throughout Nova Scotia (and abroad) for learners.

Hospitable, Welcoming Culture

The social culture of the Gaels is in comparatively robust condition in Nova Scotia, and hospitality and an interest in people are natural parts of that culture. The close interface between the public culture on display at dances and concerts and the natural social patterns of the Gaels strengthens the culture locally and also provides visitors with a real taste of Gaelic culture as lived rather than as packaged for tourism consumption.

Because of this sociability, visitors are integrated into traditional pastimes much more readily than might be the case in other regions. Audiences tend to be comparatively knowledgeable of the culture on display and are often willing to provide visitors with amplifying information when requested and directions to other similar events. Many local people make an effort to help visitors learn how to go through a square set, for instance, even to the point of actively seeking out those who look eager to dance but who have not gotten up quite enough nerve to join the set on their own. They will frequently invite and encourage such people to join in. This increases the visitor's sense of engagement with the activity, since they not only become active participants but also find themselves invited into a fairly intimate social domain of the local population. It also makes their participation less "intrusive" for locals, since the visitor is eased into the event in a somewhat controlled fashion by locals themselves, and in a supportive and mutually fulfilling social environment. Firm friendships are sometimes founded between visitors and their impromptu hosts, giving the region a special place in their affections and an especially good reason to make return visits. Because of the sociable nature of the culture, increased tourism can be accommodated (within reason) without immediately threatening the legitimacy and viability of cultural events.

Strong Local Involvement in Cultural Events

Gaelic cultural events are very much a part of the community in which they are situated. A large core of volunteers and tradition bearers are involved in putting on concerts, dances, and other cultural events. This means that local people remain in a strong position to mediate their culture. They decide what aspects of the culture to display, how it is to be displayed, when it is to be displayed, where it is to be displayed, and which proponents of the art will be involved. The culture, as a result, is presented from within their social environment and to their standards.

The organizational networks that necessarily build up around putting on cultural events develop skills and confidence in a fairly wide portion of the community. There is, as a result, already a strong core of expertise in Gaelic Nova Scotia for cultural tourism promotion. Local organizers know the resource, know the environment and available venues, know what works, as a rule, and are in close contact with performing artists and with tourists. Engaging with these community groups to jointly plan certain aspects of provincial tourism strategy and advertising would likely be fruitful. Such interaction would further enhance the development of skills and confidence in the community.

Good Distribution of Culture

Although there are traditional centres of particularly obvious strength in the Gaelic tradition (a zone centered on Mabou, stretching roughly from Creignish to Broad Cove, another zone stretching from the Iona peninsula through Christmas Island to Boisdale, the parish of Glendale, and from a song and language perspective, the St. Ann's–North Shore area) the Gaelic cultural arts are well dispersed throughout the former *Gàidhealtachd* and exhibit a certain healthy diversity within a recognizably Gaelic idiom. Visitors can usually experience a wide variety of the Gaelic art forms in various parts of the traditional Gaelic settlement area but particularly in parts of Cape Breton. Because Gaelic events take place in small rural communities and on a very frequent basis, visitors have a very good chance of happening upon any number of them during their travels. The events are also, for the same reason, usually quite reasonably priced. The diversity of the communities and community organizations also encourages a certain cultural redundancy and, hence, durability.

Although Gaelic Nova Scotia is somewhat lacking in service facilities, the wide distribution of the culture makes it easier for visitors to access events from the regional service centres that do exist. The presence of so much activity, spread over such a wide domain, however, encourages visitors to spend more time visiting a wider rural area. Many people who attend their first square dance, for instance, are excited to learn that a neighbouring community will be having another one the following night. Similarly, visitors are often delighted to find that a particular fiddler who may have impressed them at one concert will soon be appearing at another nearby or at a dance in the area or in another part of the province.

The diverse, small-scale activity has the ability to draw tourists into rural Gaelic Nova Scotia in an effective and charmingly low-key way. However, better communications between events and communities and better advertising would make this process much more effective. Newspapers like the Inverness *Oran* have an especially large section devoted to upcoming events in their area of coverage (in this case, predominantly Inverness County), which local people use as something of a social calendar in the summer. However, visitors are often not aware of its helpfulness in this regard. Papers like this tend to be very local in their coverage of such events and in their availability, as well, so it is often difficult for a visitor in one county to find out what is happening in another. Strategies that would provide easily accessible information on Gaelic events would be very helpful.

Potent Contributor to the Economy

Gaelic culture makes a very large contribution to the Nova Scotian economy. Its impressive revenue-generating capability is all the more remarkable for the lack of investment that is put into the culture. There is little financial investment in developing the cultural base, and even the bulk of the money-generating activities that grow out of the culture tend to receive very little in the way of seed or support money. The primary investment is in local volunteer hours. This takes effective advantage of one of the few good resources in a cash-poor area with high unemployment — manpower.

The money earned is also spread fairly evenly where it is severely needed in the province — in areas of high unemployment. The fact that activity tends to be small scale and well dispersed means that this income tends to find its way into many communities and is not concentrated in large urban areas or lost in successive layers of organizational bureaucracy. It is an efficient return on the community's investment of time and effort. Because so much of the activity is organized by local community groups, the money generated is often used to supplement other sources of income that keep schools, churches, hospitals, rinks, charities, and a host of other institutions running. Gaelic cultural events, therefore, have a very important role to play in helping to stabilize vulnerable rural communities right at the community level.

Nova Scotia benefits as a whole from the Gaelic economy. Revenue is spread around the province well beyond the borders of Gaelic Nova Scotia. Probably most significantly, Gaelic culture — and especially the fame of Gaelic performing artists — acts as a powerful marketing tool for the entire province. Again, this is a very effective return for the province, as it makes little or no investment but receives significant advertising rewards.

Because Gaelic economic activity appears to be strong and efficient and good at getting money where it is most needed, it would seem a sound place for government to invest. Identifying areas of present economic activity and devising strategies for supporting them — preferably at arms' length — would be desirable.

The most pressing need for investment is in renewing the cultural base. At the moment, Gaelic economic activity in the province relies upon the natural transmission of the culture within the community. These traditional channels for passing the culture on are beginning to fail, however, particularly for language. Although the language has made a return to a handful of schools, the programs are nowhere near extensive enough to ensure language renewal. Gaelic cultural arts remain absent from the public school system except in a few instances where music teachers happen, by coincidence, to be traditional musicians. There is no curriculum for Gaelic music and no training for teachers. Community groups that try to address this shortfall in their children's education through local endeavours (such as the Christmas Island or Mabou Feis) generally find cultural agencies in the province unsupportive of their efforts, often getting the impression that the Gaelic cultural arts are considered neither cultural nor artistic by these support agencies.

Gaelic culture enriches the lives of many people in eastern Nova Scotia (and further afield) and generates a steady, reliable source of revenue in small rural communities where other economic development schemes have not been especially successful. If this is to continue, steps must be taken to stop the erosion of the Gaelic cultural base in the province by finding new ways of passing the culture on from generation to generation.

Government could also play a helpful role in maximizing the economic returns currently available. CD sales are a lively part of the Gaelic economy, but CDs are only erratically available for visitors, even in Cape Breton stores. Better coordination and better advertising would not only generate more sales but also provide tourists with a quality product with its own ongoing marketing value. Bundling provincial tourism promotional materials with touring artists and making more use of artists in trade shows would also be an effective way to market Nova Scotia as a whole. Development of the shoulder seasons and better infrastructure would help maximize opportunities for Gaelic events to generate money over a longer season than they do currently.

Weaknesses

- Language near extinction
- Poor institutional support
- Fragmentation, ambivalence, low confidence, and low morale

Language Near Extinction

Gaelic culture's greatest weakness is the state of the Gaelic language. It has now reached a critical condition in Nova Scotia. The Gaelic language was once widely spoken throughout eastern Nova Scotia and has been passed down for as many as seven generations in its Nova Scotian environment. Among other things, it has been a rich repository of oral history, lore, tales, and songs. By the 1930s, however, parents throughout the last most important Gaelic districts seemed to lose confidence in the language and its associated culture, and children were actively discouraged form learning it. From that period on, there has been very little natural transmission of language related cultural art from one generation to another. Since then, Gaelic language-based culture has been dying along with the speech community.

There remains a small core of native Gaelic speakers in the province — estimated at about 500 or less — who were raised in the formerly rich Gaelic environment and who have maintained at least some of the culture's rich language traditions down to the present time. At the moment, they are unable to pass much of that material on to the next generation. Although there are at least 800 learners in the province, there have been only a few instances where learners have achieved fluency, and many learners are living remotely from native Gaelic speakers. Native speakers are dying off much faster than fluent learners are emerging.

If sound measures are not taken almost immediately, Gaelic will disappear as a native language of Nova Scotia and North America. It is not simply a case that a rich heritage language will be lost or that much cultural material will be lost, including an enormous amount of information about the history and ideas of the Gaels, difficult to find elsewhere; the language not only opens doors to a world of heritage, but also helps reinforce identity and stabilize the other elements of the culture. One Gaelic cultural study put the dilemma in perspective:

> The language is not reproducing itself. The cultural forms, such as fiddling, may seem to be, but to the extent that they are based almost totally in the language they too will quickly deteriorate. This does not mean that the resulting music, dance and so on, can't be valid, creative expressions. It does mean that there will be no justification for any claim of unbroken lines of Nova Scotian Scottish heritage. It means that these expressive forms, given the overwhelming influence of mass media, will not be locally determined or based. It means that there will be no shared right to the claims of uniqueness for our community's creativity. (Options for the 90s: 6)

The complete disappearance of the language from Nova Scotia would represent an incalculable loss to the Gaelic cultural base of eastern Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, the language is not being passed on by traditional means and is not strongly enough represented in the provincial educational infrastructure to compensate for this.

Poor Institutional Support

Like so many other minority groups, Gaels have had a great deal of difficulty making institutions in their community reflect and respond to their cultural and linguistic reality. Gaelic has been forced from important social domains that "normalize" languages and allow them to develop fully, evolve freely, and move from one generation to the next. As a European Parliamentary debate noted:

> … a language which is not taught in school, does not have access to the mass communication media and cannot be used in official and social business is by these facts alone condemned to impoverishment, decay, and ultimately, extinction. (*Cor na Gàidhlig*: 66-67)

Again, it is not simply the language that is lost but something much deeper. Linguistic studies have noted, for example, a tendency for economic decline in areas that undergo such language repression. A causal link may easily be suggested — a decreased sense of competence and self-worth in the repressed group.

> The less than salutary effect of domain-restriction on Gaels' self-esteem, not only in terms of the viability of Gaelic culture, but just as importantly in the individual Gael's perception of his ability to deal with broader social realities, has inevitably been a major factor in restricting regional development. Scottish Gaels' awareness of the "soul-killing" effect of linguistic restrictions on their society has been supported by studies conducted in other minority cultures as well. (Options for the 90s: 13)

The institutional support network in Gaelic Nova Scotia has tended to develop from the outside in rather than to grow from the community's natural organizational networks out.

External philosophies, external cultural values, and external expertise formed much of the basis for the emerging institutional complex (where it emerged at all). Compulsory public school education was a primary engine for this process, prohibiting the use of the local language, excluding local culture, and preparing members of the community for life somewhere other than in Gaelic Nova Scotia.

This has begun to slowly change, and Gaelic is inching its way into the educational infrastructure in some parts of the province. But language provision remains limited and fragmented. Only a few schools throughout the province offer any language instruction at all. In the elementary–middle schools that do, students receive less than an hour a week of instruction. It is difficult to build much of a base on such limited exposure. Only one high school in the province has a language program that affords students the opportunity to move much further on than that, and even there, it is still not possible to take Gaelic language instruction every year. Gaelic language classes are also frequently in competition with "more important" classes such as compulsory French or computer science.

Despite its remarkable richness, Gaelic history and culture are not well represented in the schools. Most schools have no Gaelic cultural content in their class provision. Only four high schools in the province are currently offering Gaelic cultural studies programs, and none offers a course in traditional music or dance. A lack of research over the years has left a legacy of very poor resource materials for the teaching of Gaelic language, history, and culture, which hampers other attempts to improve educational provision. Such courses are also particularly vulnerable to budget cuts, since language and arts courses are usually the first courses to be withdrawn.

While the institutional framework in the province has become more responsive to local culture in recent years, it is an open question how well prepared Gaels are intellectually and emotionally to seize the opportunity and start making heavier demands of their educational infrastructure. Do they have the confidence in themselves and in their culture, after the debilitating cultural message that they have been internalizing for generations? Do they have the experience to make truly effective demands that these institutions meet their needs? Do they have skilled individuals in the appropriate positions of authority to bring about effective change? Are they willing to demand much higher standards than they have in the past? These are important questions, because however much the overall institutional environment may have improved, nothing much will happen without prolonged, proactive action on the part of the Gaelic community. The small core of committed teachers who have been pushing the agenda forward thus far are in danger of being burnt out and will need much wider *active* support from the community.

It is critical that provisions for Gaelic language instruction are improved. What is desperately needed is a Gaelic program that can produce fluent speakers of the language. An educational program in the schools, complemented by a program of adult education, with recognized goals and objectives designed to incrementally bring students to fluency must be a high priority for any Gaelic development program. This task is too large for the community to take on itself. It will require the co-operation of government agencies such as the Department of Education and the Department of Tourism and Culture, as well as coordination between institutions currently providing Gaelic instruction or interested in providing such instruction. These include, the public schools, St. Francis Xavier University, the University College of Cape Breton, Saint Mary's University, the Gaelic College, and the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum.

Fragmentation, Ambivalence, Low Confidence, and Low Morale

Working within very localized community and traditional kinship networks, Gaels in Nova Scotia have proved themselves to be very effective organizers, as this study amply demonstrates. However, it has been noted by many observers, not least by Gaels themselves, that larger coordinated effort has been problematic. Institutions provide a mechanism for organizing social behaviour on a larger scale than is possible through kinship networks and local community organizations. Gaelic culture has been denied the opportunity to develop such an organizing mechanism, and this has had its own crippling pathology. The following description of cultural development problems in Scotland will have a familiar ring to people in Gaelic Nova Scotia:

> It is clear that further meaningful development in Gaelic depends on positive action by a number of agencies within a common framework of approach. We have noticed that the current situation is characterized by fragmentation of effort, lack of liaison, and a quite alarming degree of ignorance and misconception; these lead to unnecessary dissipation of scant resources and destructive, ill-formed attitudes. (*Cor na Gàidhlig*: 82)

It is not simply that Gaelic culture has been unable to develop an infrastructure and that Gaels, as a result, are somewhat lacking in experience in these forms of social organizations (which is also true); it is that the experience that they have had engaging with the larger organizational network that has traditionally been in place in their community has so often resulted in, as one Irish scholar observed of Ireland, a series of "cross-currents, ambiguities, ambivalences and disconfirming experiences" (*Irish Language*: XXXIV). The same scholar went on to point out that the ultimate outcome of generations of effective institutional exclusion for Gaelic culture has been "provincialized dependence and assimilation" and "a fractious and individualized society, given by inter-group conflicts and with few mobilizing values to collective endeavour" (*Irish Language*: XXXIV).

Gaelic Nova Scotia is plagued by the same problems and for largely the same reasons. Ambivalence towards the culture is widely evident — the result of the value that was attached to it in schools and other institutions. Any efforts around the culture tend to polarize emotions, even within individuals, whose allegiances are often highly conflicted. Unfocused frustration associated with marginalization tends to burst to the surface at surprising and often inopportune moments and is frequently directed at whoever happens to spark the fuel rather than at the real source of anger. The catalyst can often be quite trivial. Frustration is further fuelled by insensitive, externally organized cultural promotions, which tend to lower self-esteem even more, undermining local people's sense of the validity of their own culture. The combination of a past history of institutional exclusion of the culture and of such insensitive promotion of it often makes communities skeptical about the legitimacy of the rather rare opportunities that do arise. Gaelic cultural programs are often seen as political pawns in higher stakes games.

Low confidence levels make it difficult and frustrating for many people to energetically participate in organizations that are not substantially rooted in their own kin and community networks. As a result, there is rarely much coordination from one community to the next or from one organization to the next. Organizations frequently have little or no idea what potential partners are out there, what strategies they are using, and how useful co-operation can be initiated. There is frequently duplication of effort and repetition of past effort (with no knowledge of how effective the strategy proved in the past). Efforts of various communities and various groups rarely complement and often compete with each other. Indeed, rather than a latent spirit of co-operation waiting to flower, one might just as likely find guarded suspicion and jealousy existing between the various groups.

When efforts are made to coordinate activities between organizations and between communities, tension tends to increase significantly. When hostility does flare up, the intimacy of the alliances, frequently deeply rooted in kinship and community and occasionally fuelled by religious and political allegiances, can factionalize issues with amazing rapidity and intensity. Many people fall victim to the intensity and volatility of this environment and abandon working in Gaelic development altogether. Others try to stick it out by devising strategies to reduce the tension. They advocate a lower-key approach that avoids confrontation, but since this usually consists of also avoiding any of the difficult questions necessary to effect real change, it tends to marginalize the most energetic and thoughtful individuals, committed to meaningful improvement, who also leave Gaelic co-operative planning initiatives in frustration. It also tends to ensure that after years and even generations of activity, nothing much changes — at least not in any fundamental way.

Government agencies that get involved in cultural planning in Gaelic communities, having no Gaelic infrastructure to easily plug into and no clear Gaelic leadership to turn to, frequently blunder into this unpredictable environment entirely unaware of the underlying terrain and the dangerous fault lines. Their efforts to provide a larger planning framework for development are rarely any more successful than the local community's, playing into a sense of hopelessness and helplessness that is all too easily brought to the fore and lowering morale even further.

Clearly much work needs to be done on opening up lines of communication, sharing information, alleviating suspicion, identifying common interests, and devising complementary strategies for Gaelic development that encourage broader *meaningful* participation than has been successfully realized in the past.

Opportunities

- A chance to take stock and chart new directions
- A chance to develop the economy in an historically depressed part of Nova Scotia
- A chance to capitalize on an improved environment for Gaelic culture

Taking Stock

In Nova Scotia, inertial forces rooted in the past seem to be propelling Gaelic culture relentlessly down a path of decline. A planning process such as the province has embarked upon to develop a policy for Gaelic has the potential in and of itself to help break that ruthless momentum by giving everyone a chance to step back and think for a moment. Does Gaelic matter? What is the state of the culture? What has been happening and why? Are the major forces eroding the culture well understood or has socialization and assimilation provided facile answers rooted in stereotype that provide little real insight? Do current Gaelic programs take account of these submerged obstacles or are they running aground upon them again and again? Are Gaelic programs focused on matters that are urgent or matters that are important and do the major players understand the difference? What resources are available in the community and further afield to rejuvenate and sustain Gaelic culture?

Such a process of examination, particularly if it is part of a larger initiative that finds ways to encourage dialogue and also a sense of hope that action will be forthcoming, has the potential to make everyone who has a stake in the well-being of Gaelic culture re-examine their priorities. It can encourage individuals and groups to consider whether they have been focusing their energies where they really wanted to or whether they have been merely reacting as best they could to an externally imposed agenda. It can bring to light some of the entrenched attitudes, practices, and structural relationships that have hampered Gaelic's development in the past and give people the sense that they do not have to hamper Gaelic's development in the future. It can offer the chance for a fresh start in a more promising direction.

Ideally, the process of re-examining priorities will clarify issues in people's minds. They should have a clearer sense of the suitability of existing organizations and initiatives and whether these need: more help and resources to do what they already do; new organizations to complement what they do; significant changes to make them do things differently; or whether they should be abandoned in favour of entirely new ideas. By examining all the possible options out there at present and measuring them against these newly confirmed personal goals, it should also be easier to begin identifying convergences between organizations and potentials for co-operative initiatives, easing some of the suspicion that exists and making people aware that a lot of people are working in a wide variety of ways for the same overall goals.

A review of this nature also provides a potent opportunity for individuals and organizations to consider what sort of relationships they would like to have with the existing institutions in their communities (schools, for instance) and with government agencies (the Department of Tourism and Culture, for example). The process should not only help identify programs and resources for short-term development but should encourage people to consider what they themselves have to offer and how relationships with arms of the government can best be forged, organized, and maintained for the long-term realization of mutual goals. Such activity should demystify the whole process of dealing with institutions and with government and increase confidence within the community generally. At the moment, too many people find the process of communication with institutions and government agencies daunting and unrewarding. Effective work breaking down those barriers in Gaelic development will make similar efforts in other areas that much easier to realize.

Once goals, stakeholders, resources, and relationships are cast in sharper relief, it becomes easier to consider how long-term planning mechanisms can be developed and sustained. Instead of being forced to focus on short-term goals to meet seemingly urgent requirements, stakeholders will have the opportunity to start looking to the long term by developing outcomes-oriented plans with built-in accountability, especially in instances where tax dollars are to be used. For example, instead of unfocused, publicly funded programs to provide Gaelic language provision, there will be an opportunity to detail just how much improvement in language proficiency levels specific programs will be expected to achieve, how this fits in or can be made to fit in with other complementary initiatives designed to meet a larger goal — fluency in Gaelic, for example — and how such improvement can be measured. With clearly defined relationships between groups and clearly detailed responsibilities, it becomes much easier to identify, demand, and achieve specific desirable results from cultural programs.

A large-scale review process will not only reinforce the importance of having clear, specific, short and long term goals but will also draw attention to the importance of process itself. Building an infrastructure of individuals, organizations, institutions, and government agencies and the resources all of these bring to bear is one of the best investments the community will be able to make for the long-term good of its culture. Learning how to establish effective communications between the stakeholders and to disseminate information rapidly, widely, and accurately will have important long-term effects that are difficult to underestimate. For institutions and government agencies, which historically have weak interface with the community, at least as far as Gaelic goes, involvement in the process will help clarify who is doing what to support Gaelic in Nova Scotia, where they are located, and what their long-term goals are for Gaelic. This will assist them in most effectively directing their current resources and expertise and will also encourage them to consider new ways to make meaningful connections with the community for mutual development efforts in the future. For average Nova Scotians being actively engaged in this process should be an enlightening and empowering experience, helping them grow accustomed to setting standards for their institutions and organizations regarding Gaelic culture and expecting them to be met. It is critical that the process of examination, consultation, and planning leads to the community enthusiastically embracing this role as ultimate cultural mediator.

Develop the Economy in a Historically Depressed Part of Nova Scotia

Gaelic Nova Scotia is a historically depressed economic zone. A chronic lack of employment opportunities has steadily bled away the region's population (especially young adults), its infrastructure, and associated resources for more than a hundred years. Economic development schemes have been ineffective in reversing this trend and often seem only to highlight the weakness of the area as new business and development initiatives quickly fail after eating up sizable amounts of public investment. While cultural development — and especially tourism — should not be seized upon as a panacea that will quickly solve all of the region's problems, it has the potential to make an important contribution to stabilizing the economy and improving future prospects.

Experience elsewhere has indicated that in poorly serviced rural areas the local cultural arts are often a better strategy for economic development than large-scale, traditional employment creation schemes (Sproull, "The Economics of Gaelic Language Development," 1993: 1). There is also evidence that the cultural networks that are already in place actually achieve what many development agencies set out to do even though they often have no "economic" development agenda. The example of the Scottish Highlands is especially relevant:

> Gaelic arts and cultural activities appear to be making a substantial contribution to many of the main objectives set by public agencies dedicated to economic, social and linguistic development in the area. These include direct and indirect employment and output creation, the encouragement of tourism, the creation of business opportunities, the raising of self-confidence and local attachment in an area historically plagued by out-migration, stimulating a greater use of the language in domestic and social spheres and prompting greater interest in (and perceived relevance of) Gaelic medium education. (Dr. Allan Sproull, "The Demand for Gaelic Artistic and Cultural Products and Services: Patterns and Impacts": V)

Some social scientists have suggested that the reason so many regional development schemes founder is that they fail to affix any value to "social capital" — the local organizational skills rooted in kinship networks, an understanding of local culture and of local resources and expectations. They consider this to be an important resource that is often either entirely ignored or actively undermined by externally designed economic development schemes. Investing in Gaelic cultural development, by contrast, strengthens and expands that social capital. People are encouraged to use skills with which they are already familiar and from this to develop new skills and new ways of applying old skills. Their confidence is bolstered in such a process of development, as is their sense that they should take active control of the local cultural and economic development agendas.

As this study has shown, there exists a lively, small-scale, highly dispersed Gaelic economy in Nova Scotia. An organizational network rooted in the local culture is in place, and it appears to work quite well. By assisting that localized network to grow in directions the community identifies as important, government can, with a rather minimal investment of funds and expertise, not only help sustain Gaelic culture but also achieve a very positive knock-on effect on economic development. Rather than reinventing the wheel, government has the opportunity to call on an already extant, important, renewable resource base that has been frequently overlooked by outside agencies in the past. While it should also consider playing a role in the development of a cultural tourism "product," it is apparent that the community is already fairly effective at capitalizing on its culture for that purpose, and what is more critical is investment in strengthening the culture itself in the face of heavy assimilative pressures.

An Improved Environment for Gaelic

In recent decades, attitudes have changed concerning linguistic and cultural diversity. Better education has begun exploding many of the myths that have been used to marginalize minority cultures, and there seems to be increased interest in the Gaelic language and in Gaelic culture both in Nova Scotia and internationally. The fact that cultural diversity is now prized and considered a tourism asset and economic development tool will be useful in any attempts to improve the future for Gaelic.

Since the 1960s, the federal government has become increasingly supportive of multiculturalism, and this has had a positive knock-on effect at provincial levels. There remain many inconsistencies, of course, and weaknesses, but improving attitudes have resulted in fairly broad sympathy for regional cultures and practical support mechanisms for their maintenance. In Nova Scotia, culture plays a prominent part in tourism promotion, and this is probably especially true of Gaelic culture. The province actively acknowledges the existence and importance of Gaelic culture to Nova Scotia's heritage, indicating a certain broad sympathy for the culture. At the same time, there is a still nascent but increasingly effective institutional infrastructure growing in the province to sustain and promote the culture.

There exists, for example, a small but important Gaelic educational infrastructure in the province. Gaelic language instruction has been returned to one high school (Mabou) and two of its feeder schools (Port Hood and Whycocomagh), and a comprehensive high school-level instructional course will soon be available for credit over the Internet. Additionally, four schools (Mabou, Inverness, Iona, and Sydney) now offer Gaelic cultural studies. Two of the province's newest schools, Dalbrae Academy in Mabou and a soon-to-be-built school in Iona, are located in two of the most active Gaelic cultural areas in the province, both with existing Gaelic programs. These new schools offer the chance to develop real centres of excellence in Gaelic cultural education in the two communities.

Students leaving these schools have an increasingly good chance to consolidate their Gaelic skills with post-secondary Gaelic education in the province. Three universities (St. Francis Xavier, Saint Mary's, and the University College of Cape Breton) offer instruction in Scottish Gaelic, with St. Francis Xavier University offering a program of Gaelic studies. St. Francis Xavier University and Saint Mary's University are currently planning to expand their provision for Gaelic language instruction. St. Francis Xavier University has also indicated a willingness to develop a Gaelic methods course for its education department if sufficient demand is found. This improved post-secondary Gaelic educational provision represents a key development infrastructure if there is to be any increase in Gaelic language training and the provision of Gaelic teaching materials and Gaelic teachers. Again, there is no need to develop the educational infrastructure from scratch but instead to consolidate gains, expand and improve current provision, and coordinate efforts between institutions and community organizations.

Gaelic cultural institutions like the Gaelic College and the Highland Village Museum also bring Gaelic institutional infrastructure right into rural Nova Scotia. With some work, they have the potential to be a stabilizing force for the culture and the economy in Gaelic areas of the province. They can readily complement other community initiatives — some of the joint programming currently being developed between Highland Village and Rankin Memorial School in Iona looks especially promising, as an example — by providing resources, expertise, venues, advertising, encouragement, increased tourist visitation (and tourist revenue), and a host of other tangible and intangible assets. What is needed is a sense of where such institutions fit in the big scheme of Gaelic development and Gaelic cultural promotion in the province and how their efforts can be harmonized more effectively with other initiatives. Such developments may help bring the community and its institutions closer together.

A review of the various Gaelic institutional resources can also highlight some of the gaps in coverage in terms of both content and geography. For example, institutional support is almost entirely lacking in Inverness County — ironically, one of the strongest Gaelic culture areas in the province. The Gaelic programs it has in the schools come from internal school board budgets rather than from designated provincial or federal funding and are available to any other school in the province that is willing to come up with the same internal resources. In terms of specific government investment in the county, however, there is really nothing substantial.

Most of the other areas within the traditional core Gaelic areas have at least one important institution providing support for Gaelic. Antigonish County has St. Francis Xavier University with its Celtic Department, Gaelic Folklore Project Archive, and Special Collections Library; Cape Breton County has University College of Cape Breton which provides some post-secondary Gaelic educational opportunities and is home to the Beaton Institute Archive with its important Gaelic holdings; and Victoria County has both the Gaelic College at St. Ann's and the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum at Iona. Inverness County, by contrast, in spite of being the most active area in Nova Scotia for Gaelic music and dance, has only private initiatives to develop and promote the culture. Examples include *Taigh an t-Sagairt* (the Father John Angus Rankin Memorial Centre) in Glendale, the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre in Judique, The Mabou Gaelic and Historical Society in Mabou, and a strong representation of local dances and concerts and the Ceilidh Trail School of Music, which runs for three weeks of the year in Inverside. There would seem to be a strong opportunity here for the county to develop its Gaelic, music, and dance assets in a more systematic fashion.

International interest in Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture encourages pride and confidence in the local tradition and offers potential economic returns, as well. Perhaps the most important source of interest in terms of development is Scotland. There has long been considerable goodwill towards Nova Scotia, particularly in the Highlands and sincere interest in the culture and its welfare. Although there have been problems with how that goodwill has manifested itself in the past, they have usually had as much to do with how the arrangement was organized in Nova Scotia and with the inferiority complex of local organizers as they did with problems in Scotland. Many Scots, such as the public school teachers who arrived in the 1970s, have played an important role in keeping Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture going into the 21st century. *Sabhal Mòr Ostaig* in Skye, as another example, has been very generous in the past with scholarships for Canadian students. It has also begun establishing formal links with various universities and Gaelic institutions in the Maritimes and has demonstrated a keen interest in developing expertise in North Atlantic Studies — surveying the problems and opportunities of Gaelic communities on both sides of the Atlantic and placing them in a larger social-geographical perspective.

Threats

- Inaction
- External mediation
- Consensus-paralysis
- Front-loading

Inaction

Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia has reached a sufficient state of decline that inaction on the part of the community and government will now be enough to ensure its demise. The Gaelic community does many things very well but not enough things and not well enough to halt the process of cultural decline in the face of powerful assimilative pressures. This is particularly true of the Gaelic language, which will disappear as a native language of Nova Scotia within a generation if dramatic changes are not made. By the same token, Gaelic culture is now much more sympathetically appreciated in government agencies and better represented in local institutions than it has been for quite some time but not anywhere near enough to halt the process of cultural and linguistic decline. Programs give children only the barest introduction to their language and culture and only in a small area of the former Gaelic settlement zone. What is most lacking is an overarching development framework that clearly identifies the most critical cultural issues, details a series of clear goals for addressing those issues, and devises a method of accountability with a transparent means of measuring progress. The status quo is not sufficient to ensure the survival of Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia

External Mediation

External mediation of Gaelic culture has acted in concert with active repression to bring it to its present state of decline. At times, it has been difficult to distinguish between the two, with external authorities recommending the abandonment of the culture due to a whole host of stereotypical assumptions and other external authorities recommending its "celebration" entirely disconnected from any functional reality in the community. Both agendas have been justified as being in the "best interest" of the Gaelic community. Attempting to identify what is actually in the best interest of that community in such a social dynamic is extremely challenging.

Insensitive and inaccurate interpretations of the culture usually by an anglo-urban elite have not only produced a glut of misinformation and misrepresentation but have also undermined the confidence of Gaels in the validity of their culture and their own cultural experience. Increasing anglicization and the increasing importance of distantly controlled institutions in modern rural life have helped push the external mediation agenda forward even more swiftly than in the past. This undermines support for the culture in key areas, even when support seems otherwise widespread, as has been noted in Scotland:

> … broadly positive views are held across the full range of Gaelic language competence. However the results support the view that there is a minority group (around ten per cent of the population) that are much less likely to see the Gaelic language, art and culture as playing a key role in the areas social and economic development. These individuals appear to be heavily represented in the upper reaches of the professional, business and public sector hierarchies, areas where many decisions affecting the evolving role of the language will be taken. (Sproull: VI)

Lacking, for the most part, a strong, natural Gaelic leadership with a rock-solid commitment to the culture and having been historically excluded from the important institutions in society, Gaelic culture provides would-be developers with tough challenges. Leadership is necessary but where can valid guidance be found? There are no easy answers to this. Government must learn as much as it can about the culture and its community and be prepared to look for areas of consensus amongst many viewpoints. At the same time, it must be prepared to balance this against the very real need to make critical decisions and, at times, to take the initiative in suggesting ways forward. The ability to occasionally step back, take a long view, and ask the community pointed questions about its priorities is an asset government brings to this process.

The community, on the other hand, must actively seek responsibility if it does not want decisions that affect its well being to be made elsewhere. It must do a much better job of prioritizing its goals, communicating them to a larger audience, and taking a proactive role in co-operative development, both with other community partners and with institutions and government agencies. Numerous economic and cultural studies from Gaelic Scotland, Ireland, and Cape Breton seem to send a clear message that community development organizations must have the lead in any program that is to have any hope of succeeding in sustained development; however, the government has a strong role to play as a facilitator, in coordinating effort, in passing on information, in providing funding, and in helping to keep momentum going when individual partners falter.

Consensus Paralysis

Consensus building will be a critical part of any Gaelic development strategy, but it also has the potential to paralyze any meaningful development. Because the Gaelic community is so badly fragmented and lacking in many of the organizations and institutions that would be natural rallying points for unified cultural advocacy, the present basis for consensus is very slight. A great deal of effort will have to go into simply defining issues, opening lines of communication, and encouraging participation in discussion. At such an early stage, if ambitions are too grand, consensus-building can easily deteriorate into a discussion of motherhood issues — things everyone agrees upon in theory but nobody does anything about in practice.

For example, widespread consultation might reveal that 100 per cent of participants agree that rejuvenating the Gaelic language is the most important goal for the new Gaelic policy, but it may be an entirely theoretical result. That is to say that 100 per cent agree it is a top priority in theory, but in reality, perhaps 99 per cent will not set it as a priority for their group or themselves. They may leave the consensus-building exercise feeling happy that somebody is going to work on rejuvenating the Gaelic language but with no intention of doing anything in that direction themselves. They will return to their own cultural agenda — teaching fiddle, organizing dances, serving in the canteen at concerts, and so on — and working to make that happen more effectively. In effect, nothing happens regarding the goal identified as most important in discussions. Those who have been working in isolation to promote Gaelic will continue to do so, while others working to support other aspects of the tradition will continue their work, largely oblivious to the progress of the Gaelic group.

For consensus to be effective, it must not only identify theoretical priorities but also determine what people will actually be willing to do. If there is a significant gap between the two, that indicates that either the priorities are not solid or that another strategy is necessary to bridge the gap. People may say that promoting Gaelic is important because they feel that is what is expected of them, but they may have no real commitment to the goal. If that is the case, the real priorities must be identified, otherwise development efforts will not receive the support they need to be effective. It is better to have a small core of solid support than to be misled into believing that support (and action) is forthcoming from a wide constituency when that is not the case. Alternatively, the gap between what is said — the need to develop Gaelic — and action may be simply due to a belief on the part of many that they do not have the skills to carry the program forward themselves in spite of sincere interest. It is important in such instances to identify who actually does have the skills for such promotion or how they should be developed and what role, if any, these people will play in making this happen. It may be such people have other not specifically Gaelic-language skills that can be brought to bear very effectively if it is clear that they really do feel that promoting Gaelic is an important priority and that there is enough of a skilled cadre to look after other aspects of the promotion. A clear set of practical goals, a needs assessment, and attached responsibilities must be a part of the consensus-building process to keep it from being a merely theoretical exercise.

It will be important in this exercise not to insist that everyone work together before they are ready to do so. Promoting Gaelic may be identified as a priority, for instance, but the number of skilled resource people and other resources available for realizing this goal may be too small to move ahead strongly. That does not mean that the goal should be abandoned or that people who have other interests need to be reassigned from their other activities to work only on the goal of promoting Gaelic. The culture has benefited from the diversity of activity and its wide distribution in Gaelic Nova Scotia, and this should be encouraged. Rather than working together per se, groups should be encouraged first to continue the work they are presently doing but to begin sharing information and developing a co-operative spirit. It may be unrealistic to expect all the various groups to begin working together immediately, but it is not unrealistic to expect them to begin talking to one another and to try, where possible, to avoid working at cross purposes. Much of the concrete future co-operation will arise from this sort of a process of work-oriented co-operation with specific goals, rather than from discussion-oriented consensus-building exercises — though both will have a role to play. It may be that in instances such as this, government will have increased responsibility. If Gaelic language provision is identified as a priority by the community, but it is also clear that they are lacking the resources and personnel to achieve their ends or even to begin working effectively in that direction, that may be where government takes up the slack by focusing the bulk of its efforts.

The purpose of designing a Gaelic policy will also clearly be to change the status quo, but many people are comfortable with the status quo and feel threatened by change. As some of the studies quoted above indicate, those most likely to react negatively to improved Gaelic development schemes occupy, to a disproportionate degree, positions of authority. They may feel that proposed changes challenge their reputations or their current authority and absolutely refuse to co-operate on certain points. If the issues that upset them are left off the table in order to achieve broad consensus, then change is frustrated, the status quo is protected, and the entire exercise has been wasted. A sincere effort must be made to understand the concerns of all participants, but it must also be understood that there will be dissension, and there will be a need to move the process forward in spite of this. If there is no disagreement, participants need to consider whether they have been asking the difficult questions that need to be asked. Gaels have not proven to be especially comfortable in such an environment, historically, and government agencies have often demonstrated a tendency to respond to the loudest and most politically threatening objections, meaning that the process is vulnerable to minority control despite its appearances to the contrary.

All of this should remind us that a major goal of Gaelic development will be to develop the mechanisms for improved dialogue, increased consensus, and more co-operation. The consensus-building exercise should not force the issue too soon. The development of a truly representative body to provide effective leadership and advocacy should also be a goal. An organization such as the Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia might serve as a prototype, providing these improved communication links between groups, communities, and government or possibly a government agency with a good reach and representation throughout Gaelic Nova Scotia would be suitable. The issue of effective representation will need to be part of the consensus-building program; otherwise, development becomes an unending cycle of consultation without action.

Front-Loading

There is an understandable desire to see immediate results from investment. This often encourages "front-loading" — investing as close to the point of return as possible so that the results are most immediately apparent. Unfortunately, such investment does not necessarily achieve much in the long term. Studies in the Highlands have shown that investment in the community's cultural base has significant economic development outcomes, including tourism development. This cultural base is the engine that ultimately produces end-products for tourist consumption. The economic data collected for this study seem to indicate that the Gaelic community of Nova Scotia actually does a good job getting what it has to market, but that the engine might be in danger of running out of gas in the not-too-distant future. While improvements in marketing and in other areas could definitely be made, the overall impression is that the community is quite efficient in providing tourists with plentiful opportunities to access Gaelic culture and that tourists are generally pleased with the way the culture is presented and with their overall experience. The problems are looming, not so much in the delivery side, as in the supply side. That is where investment and training are most critically needed

If, in attempting to develop the Gaelic tourist economy, government focused the bulk of its efforts on marketing the Gaelic tourism product without paying due attention to renewing the Gaelic cultural resource base, the end result may soon be a slick marketing scheme for a nonexistent product. By the same token, tourism should be only one strand of a healthy Gaelic economy, and initiatives that focus unduly on marketing and product development may not be the wisest investment of time and resources. If government, on the other hand, concentrated its efforts on developing the cultural base, there is every indication that the community would itself step up its efforts to make that culture more widely available to the visiting public and, thus, maximize its economic returns for the local community. Since the culture is the economic base for the overall Gaelic economy, improvements here have a much bigger impact down stream. It is especially critical that investments be made in training skilled resource people. Good people will be the key to any successful development plan.

Priorities

- Rejuvenate the Gaelic language
- Stabilize Gaelic cultural arts
- Initiate research into Gaelic culture and disseminate the results widely
- Train a core of instructors and tradition bearers
- Develop better communications and co-operation between groups both within Nova Scotia and abroad
- Expand the Gaelic economy

Appendix A

Gaelic Events

Ceilidhs

Celtic Society Ceilidh (St. Francis Xavier University)	Antigonish	Fall and winter (weekly)	32

Ceremonies

Cairn Ceremony	Antigonish	July (once a year)	1
Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony (Gaelic Choir)	Antigonish	December (once a year)	1
Memorial Service for Pioneer Pipers	Antigonish	June (once a year)	1
Antigonish Highland Games Parade	Antigonish	July (once a year)	1
Antigonish Christmas Parade	Antigonish	December (once a year)	1
Christmas and Easter Services (Gaelic Hymns at Port Wallace United Church)	Dartmouth	December and April	2
Bard MacLean Ceremony	Glen Bard	October (once a year)	1
Culloden Day (Ceremony, lecture, ceilidh, and meal)	Lismore	April (once a year)	1
Pictou Lobster Carnival	Pictou	July (once a year)	
Gaelic Church Service (Mass and Ceilidh)	St. Andrew's	November (once a year)	1
Stellarton Homecoming Parade	Stellarton	July (once a year)	
Trenton Fun Fest Parade	Trenton	July (once a year)	1

Concerts

Festival de l' Escaoutte	Cheticamp	August (first week)	1
Antigonish Highland Games (Concert Under the Stars)	Antigonish	July (once a year)	1

Antigonish Highland Games (Opening)	Antigonish	July (once a year)	1
Antigonish Highland Games (Saturday Concert)	Antigonish	July (once a year)	1
Antigonish Highland Games (Sunday Concert)	Antigonish	July (once a year)	1
Antigonish Highland Games (Passes)	Antigonish	July (once a Year)	1
Comunn Ceilteach Concert	Antigonish	March (once a year)	1
St. Andrew's Night (Antigonish Highland Society)	Antigonish	November (once a year)	1
Celtic Music Event	Antigonish	Summer (once a year)	1
Celtic Society Ceilidh	Antigonish	Winter	3
Christmas Party (Antigonish Heritage Museum)	Antigonish	December (once a year)	1
Clan Chisholm Dinner	Antigonish	July (once a year)	1
Clan Chisholm Christmas Party	Antigonish	December (once a year)	1
Piper's Pub Ceilidhs	Antigonish	Year round	6
Step dancing Recital (Maureen Fraser)	Antigonish	March (once a year)	1
Arichat Ocean View Festival	Arichat	July (once a year)	1
Baddeck Gathering Ceilidhs	Baddeck	July and August (6/week)	48
Bards and Ballads	Baddeck	October (once a year)	1
The Kitchen Ceilidh	Baddeck	October (once a year)	1
Belle Cote Days	Belle Cote	July (once a year)	1
Ben Eoin Fiddle & Folk Festival	Ben Eoin	Summer (once a year)	1
Big Pond Annual Scottish Concert	Big Pond	July (once a year)	1
Big Pond Annual Concert	Big Pond	July (once a year)	1
Pastoral Airs	Big Pond	Summer (once a year)	1
Fire Department Ceilidh	Blues Mills	Year round (2/month)	24
Boisdale Family Picnic	Boisdale	August (once a year)	1

Broad Cove Scottish Concert	Broad Cove	July (once a year)	1
The French Connection	Cheticamp	October (once a year)	1
Doryman Tavern Fiddle Matinee	Cheticamp	May–October	30
Gabrielle Lounge Fiddle Matinee	Cheticamp	Year-round	3
Cheticamp Concerts on the Boardwalk	Cheticamp	10 May–15 Oct (daily)	180
Feis an Eilein Milling Frolic	Christmas Island	August (once a year)	1
Clan MacNeil Day	Christmas Island	August (once a year)	1
Feis an Eilein Family Ceilidh	Christmas Island	August (once a year)	1
Feis an Eilein Piper's Ceilidh	Christmas Island	August (once a year)	1
Bu Deonach Leam Tilleadh (I would willingly return)	Christmas Island	July–August	6
Christmas Island Ceilidh	Christmas Island	October (once a year)	1
Feis a' Gheamhraidh	Christmas Island	Winter (once a year)	1
Feis a' Gheamhraidh	Iona (school)	Winter (once a year)	1
Jamieson's Pub Sessions	Cole Harbour	Year-round	52
Creignish Ceilidh by the Sea	Creignish	August (second week)	1
Ceilidh Concert Series	Dingwall	June–September (weekly)	16
Winston's Home	Dingwall	October (once a year)	1
Sandbar Pub Fiddle Matinee	Dominion	Year-round	6
Once Upon an Old Time Christmas	East Lake Ainslie	December	1
The Giant's Ceilidh	Englishtown	October (once a year)	1
Annual Mi'kmaq & Scottish Concert	Eskasoni	August (once a year)	1
Dougie's Return	Glace Bay	October (once a year)	1
Celtic Colours Opening Gala	Glace Bay	October (once a year)	1
Savoy Theatre Concerts	Glace Bay	Year-round	10
Howie's Celtic Brew	Nova Scotia	June–August	19
Glencoe Mills Pastoral Airs Concert	Glencoe Mills	December (once a year)	1
Glendale Ceilidh Days Concert	Glendale	July (once a year)	1

The MacDonald's of Queensville	Glendale	October	1
Wednesday Night Ceilidhs	Glendale	July–mid-October	15
Glenora Inn & Distillery Ceilidhs	Glenville	Mid–June to mid–October	120
Classical Celts	Groves Point	October (once a year)	1
Arkandor Fiddle Concert	Groves Point	Summer	1
Millennium Pipes and Drums	Groves Point	Summer	1
Performance of Celtic Music (Nova Scotia Symphony & traditional performers)	Halifax	Year-round	2
Sheraton Casino Concerts	Halifax	Year-round	6
Sheraton Casino Concerts	Halifax	Year-round	260
An Cliath Clis Concert	Halifax	May	1
An Cliath Clis Milling Frolic	Halifax	Year-round	10
Your Father's Moustache Pub (Cape Breton Ceilidh)	Halifax	Year-round	8
Chorale and String Ensemble (Dalhousie Medical School)	Halifax	Year-round	4
Old Triangle Pub Sessions (Dave MacIsaac)	Halifax	Year-round	52
Old Triangle Pub Sessions (Robert Deveaux)	Halifax Concert	Year-round	52
Old Triangle Pub Sessions (Traditional Music)	Halifax	Year-round	52
St. Patrick's Day Variety Concert	Heatherton (school)	March (once a year)	1
Fiddle Recital	Heatherton (school)	May (once a year)	1
Kalapa Valley Concert Series	Ingonish	July-August (2/month)	4
Irish Roots	Ingonish	October (once a year)	1
The Hoff Boxing Day Fiddle Matinee	Inverness	December	1
Inverness Crabfest	Inverness	July (once a year)	1
Buddy MacMaster in the Park	Inverness	July (once a year)	1
Inverness Gathering Fisherman's Picnic	Inverness	July (once a year)	1
Makem & More	Inverness	October (once a year)	1

The Bear Paw Ceilidh	Inverness	Spring–fall (occasional)	10
Thursday Night Ceilidh	Inverness	End of June–mid-September	11
The Hoff Fiddle Matinees	Inverness	Summer (several times a month)	6
Highland Village Day	Iona	August (once a year)	1
Iona Pastoral Airs	Iona	December (once a year)	1
Christmas Open House (Nova Scotia Highland Village)	Iona	December (two days)	2
Gaelic Awareness Month Activities (Nova Scotia Highland Village)	Iona	May (once a year)	1
Waters of Iona	Iona	October (once a year)	1
Joe MacLean CD Launch	Iona	Spring (once)	1
Funky Museum Road Show (Nova Scotia Highland Village)	Iona	Summer (once a year)	1
Donnie Campbell CD Launch	Iona	Summer (once)	1
Ceilidhs for Alderwood Visitors	Iona	Summer (twice)	2
Johnstown Milling Frolic & Square Dance	Johnstown	August (once a year)	1
Annual Scottish Variety Concert	Johnstown	May (once a year)	1
Piano Summit	Judique	April (once a year)	1
Kintyre Farm Scottish Concert	Judique	August (once a year)	1
Kintyre Farm Scottish Concert Ceilidh	Judique	Augusts (once a year)	1
Buddy MacMaster CD Release	Judique	August (once a year)	1
Glenn Graham CD Release	Judique	July (once a year)	1
Judique on the Floor	Judique	July (once a year)	1
Fiddler's Heaven	Judique	October (once a year)	1
Guitar Summit	Judique	October (once a year)	1
Ceilidh at Jack's	Judique	May–October	8
Pizza & Pub Nights	Judique	Year-round	3
Highland Guitar Society Jam Sessions	Judique	Year-round (weekly)	50
L'Ardoise Acadian Days Festival	L'Ardoise	July (once a year)	1

L'Ardoise Acadian Days Festival (Mini Search for Stars)	L'Ardoise	July (once a year)	1
Louisbourg Crossroads	Louisbourg	October (once a year)	1
Step into the Past	Louisbourg	October (once a year)	1
Mabou Ceilidh Concert	Mabou	July (once a year)	1
Mabou Ceilidh Gala	Mabou	July (once a year)	1
Mabou Ceilidh Craft Show & Milling Frolic	Mabou	July (once a year)	1
Mabou Victoria Day Weekend Concert	Mabou	May (once a year)	1
Mabou Thanksgiving Concert	Mabou	October (once a year)	1
Kinship	Mabou	October (once a year)	1
Mabou Tuesday Night Ceilidhs	Mabou	End of June–end of September	12
Orain Ghaidhlig Gu leor (Plenty of Gaelic Songs)	Mabou	August (once a year)	1
Strathspey Place Concerts	Mabou	Year-round (2/month)	24
Red Shoe Pub Fiddle Matinee	Mabou	Year-round (Weekly)	50
Mabou Coal Mines Ceilidh on the Wharf	Mabou Coal Mines	August (once a year)	1
Mabou Harbour Fisherman's Ceilidh	Mabou Harbour	July (once a year)	1
The Schooner Restaurant Jam Sessions	Margaree Harbour	July (2/week)	6
The Schooner Restaurant Gaelic Singing	Margaree Harbour	July–End of September	12
Normaway Inn Ceilidh Series	Margaree Valley	July–October (Weekly)	16
Tunes for the Mira	Marion Bridge	October (once a year)	1
Mira Gala Pastoral Airs	Marion Bridge	Summer (once a year)	1
Jack Duggan's Pub Night	New Waterford	Year-round (Weekly)	50
Firemen's Days Variety Concert	North East Margaree	July (once a year)	1
St Patrick's Day Concert	North East Margaree	March (once a year)	1
North River Community Concerts	North River	Year-round (monthly)	12
Songs from the Shore	North Shore	October (once a year)	1
Rollie's Wharf Traditional Music Night	North Sydney	Year-round (weekly)	50
Raise the Roof	Petit de Grat	October (once a year)	1

Pictou Hector Festival	Pictou	August (once a year)	1
Trenton Concert Under the Stars	Trenton	August (once a year)	1
Cash Crusade for Kids	Port Hawkesbury	February (once a year)	1
Celtic Pub	Port Hawkesbury	October (once a year)	1
Celtic Women	Port Hawkesbury	October (once a year)	1
Granville Green Concert Series	Port Hawkesbury	Summer (July–August)	8
Creamery Tuesday Ceilidh	Port Hawkesbury	20 June to mid-October	16
Papa's Pub Fiddle Matinees	Port Hawkesbury	Year round (occasional)	4
Port Hood Mother's Day Concert	Port Hood	May (once a year)	1
Celtic Colours Tune Circle	Port Hood	October (once a year)	1
Come Home Week Variety Concert	River Bourgeois	August (once a year)	1
Tara Lynn Touesnard Bursary Fund Concert	River Bourgeois	October (once a year)	1
Kelly's Dream	Ross Ferry	October (once a year)	1
Fireman's Ceilidh Days Beer Garden	Scotsville	July (once a year)	1
Kinettes' Concert	South West Margaree	July (once a year)	1
Parish Spring Concert	South West Margaree	May (once a year)	1
St Joseph du Moine Scottish Concert	St Joseph du Moine	August (once a year)	1
Festival on the Lake Concert	St Peter's	July (once a year)	1
Home Coming Concert	St. Andrew's	July (once a year)	1
Home Coming Variety Concert	St. Andrew's	July (once a year)	1
St. Andrew's Day Concert	St. Andrew's	November (once a year)	1
Recital (Fiddle and Piping students)	St. Andrew's	May (once a year)	1
Fiddler's Festival Saturday Concert	St. Ann's	August (once a year)	1
Fiddler's Festival Sunday Concert	St. Ann's	August (once a year)	1
Celtic Colours Festival Club	St. Ann's	October (eight nights)	8
Celtic Colours Piper's Ceilidh	St. Ann's	October (once a year)	1
Celtic Colours The Cape Breton Fiddlers	St. Ann's	October (once a year)	1

MacBouch Lounge Fiddle Matinee	St. Peter's	Year-round (monthly)	12
St. Peter's Variety Show Ceilidh	St. Peter's	Year-round (once a year)	1
Cape Breton Gaelic Society Concerts	Sydney	April-October (monthly)	7
Home for the Holidays	Sydney	December (once a year)	1
Crown & Moose Pub Ceilidhs	Sydney	Fall–Spring (weekly)	32
Celtic Pianos	Sydney	October (once a year)	1
Celtic Colours Songs of the Gael	Sydney	October (once a year)	1
Cape Breton Gaelic Society Milling Frolics	Sydney	Year-round (5/year)	5
Crown & Moose Pub Fiddle Nights	Sydney	Year-round (weekly)	50
Celtic Colours Cabaret	Sydney	October (once a year)	1
Bobby Burn's Day Concert	Sydney Mines (school)	January (once a year)	1
Ziggy's Fiddle Matinee	Sydney River	Fall-spring (2/month)	16
Ziggy's Fiddle Matinee, Big Name Acts	Sydney River	Year round (4/year)	4
West Bay Festival By The Lake	West Bay	July or August	1
West Bay Road Fall Fair	West Bay Road	September (once a year)	1
West Mabou Ceilidh at the Gazebo	West Mabou	July–August	8
Whycocomagh Summer Festival (Gaelic Pub)	Whycocomagh	July (once a year)	1
Whycocomagh Summer Festival (Ceilidhs)	Whycocomagh	July (10/week)	10
Whycocomagh Gathering	Whycocomagh	October (once a year)	1

Dances

World's Biggest Square Dance	Baddeck	October (once a year)	1
Belle Cote Days Adult Dance	Belle Cote	July (once a year)	1
Big Wave Festival Square Dance	Big Bras d'Or	Summer	1
Big Pond Square Dance	Big Pond	October (once a year)	1
Big Pond Festival Square Dance	Big Pond	Summer	1
Boisdale Square Dances	Boisdale	Year-round	6

Brook Village Adult Square Dance	Brook Village	July-August (weekly)	8
Feis an Eilein Family Square Set Ceilidh	Christmas Island	August (once a year)	1
Clan MacNeil Square Dances	Christmas Island	Year-round	3
Creignish Ceilidh By The Sea	Creignish	August (second week)	1
Creignish Easter Dance	Creignish	April (once a year)	1
Creignish Valentine's Day Dance	Creignish	February (once a year)	1
Creignish New Year's Eve Dance	Creignish	January (once a year)	1
Creignish Halloween Dance	Creignish	October (once a year)	1
Feis an Eilein Bonfire and Square Dance	Grand Narrows	August (once a year)	1
Cape Breton Club Square Dance	Halifax (Fairview)	Winter	10
Judique New Year's Eve Dance	Judique	January (once a year)	1
Victoria Day Family Square Dance	Glencoe Mills	May (once a year)	1
Glencoe Mills Family Square Dance	Glencoe Mills	July–August (weekly)	8
Canada Day Family Square Dance	Glencoe Mills	July (once a year)	1
Glencoe Day Family Dance	Glencoe Mills	July (once a year)	1
Labour Day Family Square Dance	Glencoe Mills	September (once a year)	1
Thanksgiving Family Square Dance	Glencoe Mills	October (once a year)	1
Glendale New Year's Eve Dance	Glendale	January (once a year)	1
Glendale Ceilidh Days Family Dance	Glendale	July (once a year)	1
Glendale Ceilidh Days Adult Dance	Glendale	July (once a year)	1
Genealogy Roots Day Adult Dance	Glendale	August (once a year)	1
Inverness Gathering Arena Day Dance	Inverness	July (once a year)	1
Highland Village Day Square Dance	Iona	August (once a year)	1
Iona Legion Square Dances	Iona	Year-round	4
Kintyre Farm Scottish Concert Dance	Judique	August (once a year)	1
Judique on the Floor Dance	Judique	July (once a year)	1
Tartan Ball	Judique	July (once a year)	1

Ashley MacIsaac Square Dance	Judique	March (once a year)	1
Mabou Ceilidh Adult Dance	Mabou	July (once a year)	1
Boxing Night Dance	Mabou	December (once a year)	1
Mira Gala Square Dance	Marion Bridge	July (once a year)	1
Middle River Square Dance	Middle River	October (once a year)	1
French Club Boxing Day Square Dance	New Waterford	December (once a year)	1
Chestico Days Pub & Square Dance	Port Hood	July (Friday & Saturday)	2
Scotsville New Year's Eve Dance	Scotsville	January (once a year)	1
South West Margaree Adult Square Dances	South West Margaree	June–Sept. (weekly)	10
Cape Breton Fiddler's Association	St. Ann's	August (once a year)	1
Strathlorne Family Dance	Strathlorne	July (once a year)	1
Cape Breton Gaelic Society Square Dances	Sydney	Year-round (2/month)	24
Highland Village Day Eve Square Dance	Washabuck	July (once a year)	1
West Mabou Family Dance	West Mabou	Year-round (weekly)	52
Elmer Fraser Square Dances	Westmount	Year-round	10

Workshops, Lectures, Demonstrations and Conversation Groups

Mary's Islanders Performances (Dance display)	Annapolis Valley	Year-round (monthly)	12
Latha Gàidhlig (Gaelic Day)	Antigonish (St. F.X.)	October & March	2
Milling Song Workshop (Celtic Society)	Antigonish	October & March	2
Gaelic Conversation Meetings	Antigonish	Winter (monthly)	8
Bòrd Gàidhlig (Gaelic conversation)	Antigonish (St. F.X.)	Winter (2/month)	24
Gathering of the Arts (St. F.X.) (Gaelic Language, History and Song Workshop)	Antigonish	January (once a year)	1
Antigonish Heritage Museum (Lectures on Gaelic Culture)	Antigonish		2
Antigonish Heritage Museum (Milling Frolic and Lecture)	Antigonish	July (once a year)	1
Pibroch Society Workshop Recital	Antigonish	Year-round	3

Scotia Highland Dancers (Highland Dance Display)	Antigonish	July (once a year)	1
Creignish Ceilidh By The Sea (Dance and Workshop)	Creignish	August (second week)	1
Forrester's Dance Recital (Highland Dance & Step Dancing Display)	Glace Bay	June (once a year)	1
Glendale Workshops & Evening Ceilidh	Glendale	October (once a year)	1
Lochaber Performance (Concert and Lecture)	Halifax	Year-round	36
Comunn Seinn Lectures (Lectures on Cultural Themes)	Halifax	Fall and winter	24
Pier 21 Multicultural Performance (Concert and Display)	Halifax	Summer	1
Amethyst Dancers Performances (Highland Dance & Step Dancing Display)	Halifax (and Nova Scotia)	Year-round (monthly)	1
Talent, Tunes & Taps (Fiddle, Piano and Step Dancing Workshops)	Judique	July and August (weekly)	8
Pioneer Ground Children's Day Camp (Scottish pioneer history for children)	Judique	July to mid-August	12
Gaelic Heritage Night (Concert and Lecture)	Kingston (school)	May	1
An Drochaid (The Bridge) (Gaelic Lectures, Song and Story Sessions)	Mabou	Year-round	16
An Drochaid (The Bridge) (Gaelic Language and Song Workshops)	Mabou	October–December (3/month)	9
Feis Mhàbu (Mabou Gaelic Festival) (Gaelic Language, Fiddling and Step Dancing Workshops)	Mabou	May, July, October (3 days)	3
Gaelic Day (Brown's School) (Gaelic Language and Singing Workshop)	New Glasgow	May (once a year)	1
Orangedale Railway Station Open House (Museum display and Concert)	Orangedale	September (once a year)	1
Triskele at the Creamery (Concert and Lecture)	Port Hawkesbury	July–August (Thursdays)	8
Gaelic Conversation Meetings	Port Hawkesbury	Yearly	52
Chestico Days Step Dancing Festival (Step Dancing and Square Dancing Workshops)	Port Hood	August (once a year)	1

Chestico Museum & Historical Society (Step Dance & Square Dance Workshop/Gaelic Song Workshop)	Port Hood	October (once a year)	1
Celtic Colours Reading Ceilidh	Sydney	October (once a year)	1
Forrester's Dance Recital (Highland Dance & Step Dancing Display)	Sydney	June (once a year)	1

Miscellaneous

CKEC Promotion (Gaelic Cultural Awareness Month Promotion with Questions on Gaelic Culture)	New Glasgow	May (once a year)	1
Whycocomagh Summer Festival (Marag Supper – Traditional Gaelic food)	Whycocomagh	July (once a year)	1
Whycocomagh Summer Festival (Pancake Breakfast with Fiddle Music)	Whycocomagh	July (once a year)	1

Appendix B

Lessons

Bagpipes

Wally Ellison		West Bay Road
Madeline Evans	(Balmoral Girls' Pipe Band)	Stellarton
Darren Knox		New Glasgow
Marie MacDonald		Inverness
Heather MacIsaac		
Sandra MacIsaac		Giant's Lake
John MacPhee		
Heather Smith		Hillsborough
DaleWaddell		
John Walsh	The Heather Bell Ladies Pipe Band	Pictou
John Walsh		Antigonish
Sandra Watson		Inverness
Scott Williams	(grades 4–6)	St Andrew's
Scott Williams		Antigonish
Antigonish Highland Society School of Piping and Drumming		Antigonish
Pibroch Society		Antigonish
The Ceilidh Pipe Band		New Glasgow
Dunvegan Girls Pipe Band		Westville
Fraser Holm's Memorial Ladies Pipe Band		New Glasgow

#219 Royal Canadian Air Cadets Pipe Band (Affiliated with school)		New Glasgow

Clarsach

Jenny Tingsley		Boularderie

Fiddle

Andrea Beaton		Whycocomagh
Karen Beaton		Mabou
Allie Bennett		North Sydney
Natasha Lynn Burke		River Bourgeois
Melody Cameron		Mabou
Brenda Stubbert	Ceilidh Trail School of Celtic Music	Inverness
Buddy MacMaster	Ceilidh Trail School of Celtic Music	Inverness
David Greenberg	Ceilidh Trail School of Celtic Music	Inverness
Karen MacLean	Ceilidh Trail School of Celtic Music	Inverness
Winnie Chafe		Glace Bay
Stan Chapman		St. Andrew's (School)
Stan Chapman		Heatherton (School)
Joseph Dory		River Bourgeois Halifax
Jackie Dunn-MacIsaac		Port Hood (School)
Feis an Eilein		Christmas Island
Kimberly Fraser		Sydney Mines
Glenn Graham		Halifax

Colin Grant	Sydney
David Greenberg	Halifax
Christine Hodder	Wolfville
Jerry Holland	North Sydney
Kimberly Holmes	Shubenacadie
Skip Holmes	Halifax
Nicole Johannesen	Halifax
Anna Ludlow	Antigonish
Helen MacDonald	New Waterford
Karen MacDonald	Lismore
Marvin MacDonald	Sydney Mines
Shawn MacDonald	Sydney
Stuart MacDonald	Sydney
John MacDougall	Kenloch
Kendra MacGillivray	Halifax
Troy MacGillivray (J. Tone Music Store)	Antigonish
Beverly MacLean	Boularderie
Seamus MacNeil	Dartmouth
Byron MacPhee	Sydney
Ed Rodgers	Guysborough
Jennifer Roland	Alder Point
Anthony Rusesko	Halifax
Dara Smith	Antigonish

Take Note Music School		Sydney

Gaelic

Alex Aucoin		Inverness
Margie Beaton		Mabou
Bernard Cameron		Mabou
Shelly Campbell		Glendale
Cape Breton Gaelic Society		Sydney
University College of Cape Breton		Sydney
Comunn Gaidhlig Ard Bhaile		Halifax
Comunn Seinn		Halifax
Feis an Eilein		Christmas Island
Calum MacKenzie		Middleton
Calum MacKenzie		Middleton (Internet)
Anna MacKinnon		Inverness
Murdhena MacRae		Internet
Trueman Matheson		St. Andrew's
Effie Rankin		Mabou
Jim Watson		Queensville (Internet)
Saint Mary's University		Halifax
St. Francis Xavier University		Antigonish
The Gaelic College		St. Ann's
Catriona Parsons	Gaelic Choir (Adult)	Antigonish

Catriona Parsons	Gaelic Choir (Children)	Antigonish
Learning Milling Workshop	Gaelic Song (An Cliath Clis)	Halifax
Milling Workshops	Gaelic Song (An Cliath Clis)	Nova Scotia
St. Francis Xavier University	Celtic Studies	Antigonish
The Gaelic College	Gaelic Culture	St. Ann's

Cape Breton Guitar

Brian Doyle	Ceilidh Trail School of Celtic Music	Inverness
Dave MacIsaac	Ceilidh Trail School of Celtic Music	Inverness

Highland Dance

Amethyst Society	Halifax
Campell School of Dance	Sydney Mines
Forrester's School of Dance	Sydney & Glace Bay
Shelly Grant	Antigonish
Kelly MacArthur	Sydney
Esther MacDonnell	St. Peter's
Janice MacQuarrie	Antigonish
Mary's Islanders	Greenwood
Dale Ryan	Port Hawkesbury
Heather Smith	Hillsborough

Piano Accompaniment

Lawrence Cameron		Belle Cote
Doug MacPhee	Ceilidh Trail School of Celtic Music	Inverness
Tracey Dares	Ceilidh Trail School of Celtic Music	Inverness
Feis an Eilein		Christmas Island
Marilyn MacDonald-MacKinnon		New Waterford
Amanda MacDougall		Judique
Heather Richards		Port Hawkesbury
Take Note Music School		Sydney

Step Dance

Campell School of Dance		Sydney Mines
Sally Clark		Port Hawkesbury
Feis an Eilein		Christmas Island
Forrester's School of Dance		Sydney and Glace Bay
Kimberly Fraser		Sydney Mines
Maureen Fraser		Lochaber
Kay Handrahan		New Waterford
Kay Handrahan	Ceilidh Trail School of Celtic Music	Inverness
Kelly MacArthur		Sydney
Alicia MacDonald		Washabuck
Helen MacDonald		New Waterford
Mary Janet MacDonald	Ceilidh Trail School of Celtic Music	Inverness
Mary MacGillivray	Ceilidh Trail School of Celtic Music	Inverness

Beverly MacLean		Boularderie
Jean MacNeil		Sydney Mines
Melanie MacQuarrie	Ceilidh Trail School of Celtic Music	Inverness
Pauline & Kim Malcolm		St. Andrew's
Pauline & Kim Malcolm		Heatherton
Pauline & Kim Malcolm		Lismore
Pauline & Kim Malcolm		Stellarton
Jennifer Roland		Alder Point
Marie Currie Wilson		Westmount
Cape Breton School of Dance (adult)		Sydney
Cape Breton School of Dance (youth)		Sydney
Halifax Dance		Halifax
Nicole Johannesen		Halifax
Joseph Wallin School of Dance		Dartmouth
Shannon Solomon	NSCC	Halifax
Shannon Solomon	YWCA	Halifax
Mary's Islanders		Greenwood

Square Dance

Kay Handrahan	Ceilidh Trail School of Music	Inverness
Mary MacGillivray	Ceilidh Trail School of Music	Inverness

Appendix C

Gaelic, Cultural and Tourism Development Studies

Nova Scotia

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Gaelic Arts: A Way Ahead. (*The Scottish Arts Council*: Dr. Finlay MacLeod, 1986)

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Cultural Planning for Community Development – The Irish Experience. (Galway: Pádraig O hAoláin, the Gaeltacht Development Authority, c.1990)

Developing Sustainable Growth 1993-1997: The Role of Cultural Tourism. (Sean Browne, c.1997)

Cultural Tourism in the Development of the Gaeltachtai. (Antaine Ó Sé, c.1992)

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